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The Utility of an ACADEMIC  
or CLASSICAL EDUCATION  
for Young Men who have  
to Earn their Own Living  
and who Expect to Pursue  
a COMMERCIAL LIFE

*An Investigation*

By R. T. Crane

*SECOND EDITION.*

Chicago

1903

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## INTRODUCTION TO SECOND EDITION.

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The great interest which has been manifested in the first edition of this little book would indicate that it tended, in a measure at least, to fill a decidedly long-felt want, and this has encouraged me to pursue the subject somewhat further. The fact that my book has met with so little adverse criticism I regard as a great compliment. Indeed, there has been but one criticism, so far as I know, which was worthy of notice, and that is noticed briefly on page 32.

In this second edition, therefore, I have added the results of my further investigation to the matter already contained in the first edition.





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# THE UTILITY OF AN ACADEMIC OR CLASSICAL EDUCATION FOR YOUNG MEN WHO HAVE TO EARN THEIR OWN LIVING AND WHO EXPECT TO PURSUE A COMMERCIAL LIFE.

## PART ONE.

### HERBERT SPENCER'S OPINION OF A CLASSICAL EDUCATION.

Upon the subject of education Mr. Herbert Spencer has the following to say:

“ The remark is trite that in his shop, or his office, in managing his estate or his family, in playing his part as director of a bank or a railway, he [the college graduate] is little aided by this knowledge he took so many years to acquire—so little that generally the greater part of it drops out of his memory. \* \* \*

“ If we inquire what is the real motive for giving boys a classical education, we find it to be simply conformity to public opinion. Men dress their children's minds as they do their bodies, in the prevailing fashion.

\* \* \*

“ A boy's drilling in Latin and Greek is insisted on, not because of their intrinsic value, but that he may not be disgraced by being found ignorant of them—that he may have the ‘ education of a gentleman ’—the badge marking a certain social position, and bringing a consequent respect. \* \* \*

“ To get above some and be revered by them, and to propitiate those who are above us, is the uni-

versal struggle in which the chief energies of life are expended. \* \* \*

"Not what knowledge is of most real worth, is the consideration, but what will bring most applause, honor, respect — what will most conduce to social position and influence — what will be most imposing. As throughout life, not what we are but what we shall be thought, is the question; so in education the question is not the intrinsic value of knowledge so much as its extrinsic effects on others. And this being our dominant idea, direct utility is scarcely more regarded than by the barbarian when filing his teeth and staining his nails. \* \* \*

"But 'we that have but span-long lives' must ever bear in mind our limited time for acquisition. And remembering how narrowly this time is limited, not only by the shortness of life but also still more by the business of life, we ought to be especially solicitous to employ what time we have to the greatest advantage. Before devoting years to some subject which fashion or fancy suggests, it is surely wise to weigh with great care the worth of the results, as compared with the worth of various alternative results which the same years might bring if otherwise applied."

## OPINIONS OF COLLEGE MEN.

### A STATEMENT OF THE CASE.

It should be borne in mind that, wherever college education is mentioned herein, it refers exclusively to the so-called "academic" course, or the classical and literary department. Too much emphasis can not be laid upon this distinction, for neglect of it is the cause of a large part of the confusion of thought and expres-

sion on this subject which is so prevalent among even the educated. By referring to the letter of Charles W. Eliot, on page 12, it appears that even so highly educated a gentleman as the president of Harvard University confounds an academic course with scientific and technical courses! The reader is urged to avoid this mistake carefully.

The question whether an academic, or even a high-school course is of benefit to young men who have to make their own way in the business world and intend entering upon a commercial life, is one of such vital importance and is surrounded by so much doubt, that it is high time it was thoroughly investigated. If the facts are as many believe, these institutions are the cause of most serious error, if not of positive injury to this class of young men.

A great deal has been written upon this subject, but, so far as I have been able to discover, the writers have given merely their opinions or theories, not facts. The great majority of college presidents agree in urging the importance of college education for business men, as will be seen by reference to the letters quoted in the following pages from prominent educators.

It has seemed to me that the testimony of a large number of heads of universities, college graduates, and prominent business men would be of great assistance in arriving at something tangible on this subject. I have, therefore, made quite an extensive investigation along this line, the results of which are here given, together with certain comments. First will be found a copy of a letter sent to the presidents of nineteen of the principal universities and colleges in this country, and the replies from all who answered; which will show how little light they are able to give on this subject.

A COPY OF THE LETTER SENT TO COLLEGE PRESIDENTS.

CHICAGO, September 5, 1901.

Dear Sir:

*The question of the utility of an academic course for young men who have to make their own living and who expect to pursue a commercial life, is one of the greatest importance, and as I am endeavoring to ascertain what the facts are in this matter, I should be very glad indeed if you would kindly favor me with an answer to the enclosed questions.*

*Thanking you in advance for your attention to this matter, I am*

*Yours truly,*

R. T. CRANE.

THE QUESTIONS ASKED.

1. Is there, in your opinion, any evidence that such education is of any advantage to this class of young men?
2. If so, what evidence?
3. Have you made any systematic effort to ascertain:
  - [a] What success such college graduates have met with in securing positions?
  - [b] How successful they have been after going into business?
4. If question No. 3 is answered affirmatively, what have you found to be the facts?
5. Can you mention any employers who, when seeking employes, are in the habit of asking, from the head of any college, information regarding students about to graduate,

with the view of selecting their help from among such students?

6. Please give an estimate of how much it costs your college to give a young man such a course of education. I do not mean by this simply the student's tuition, but you should also include interest on the plant, taxes, insurance, wear and tear, in fact everything that enters into the actual cost of running the college.
7. Can you give me the names and addresses of the secretaries of classes that were graduated from your college five to eight years ago? I may wish to obtain from them a list of their classmates, in order to make some inquiries of such young men, should the information received from the heads of the colleges be unsatisfactory.

#### THE OPINIONS OF COLLEGE PRESIDENTS.

Six of the universities did not reply, *viz.*:

*Cornell University.*

*Washington University, St. Louis.*

*University of Pennsylvania.*

*University of Wisconsin.*

*University of Minnesota.*

*University of Rochester.*

The replies received from the others I give complete, with the exception of their answers to questions Nos. 6 and 7. The reason for omitting No. 6 will be found on page 90. Question No. 7, of course, is of no interest to the reader.



CHARLES W. ELIOT,  
*President of Harvard University.*

"The question of the utility of an academic course for young men who are going into business can not be intelligently discussed unless the term 'academic course' be clearly defined. I understand it to comprehend any course of study in a college or scientific school which covers approximately the years from seventeen or eighteen to twenty or twenty-two. With this understanding of the term, there can be no question whatever that an academic course is in the highest degree desirable for capable young men who mean to make their living in business. By business I understand banking, transportation, manufacturing, mining, large-scale farming, and engineering in all its branches. These occupations require nowadays, in all their higher levels, a trained mind, and a deal of appropriate information. This training and information can only be acquired in colleges and scientific schools. A young man who is going into business had better take an academic course, in my sense of the term, if he has any mind to train. That is an indisputable proposition, and there is no use in discussing it.

"To get detailed evidence of the truth of these statements, I should advise you to procure a series of the triennial or quinquennial class reports, which are published by the class secretaries at Harvard, and I suppose at other colleges. These reports give the occupations and mode of life of the members of a class, and even of persons who have been temporarily connected with the class.

"By a careful examination of a series of these

reports you will get abundant evidence that college and scientific school training nowadays is profitable, indeed, indispensable to a young man going into the higher walks of business. To procure such a series from Harvard you had better apply to Mr. Jerome D. Greene, President's Secretary, Cambridge, Massachusetts."

---

This letter, from so high an authority, is such a perfect illustration of the weakness of the whole argument on the affirmative side of our subject, and of the prevalent confusion of thought concerning it, that I pause to give it special notice. In order to make out his case, President Eliot is obliged to stretch the academic course to cover every department, classical, scientific, or technical; and then, with similar generosity, he tries to make "business" include farming, mining, and engineering! Of course all this has nothing to do with the case.

It is only too evident that the distinguished gentleman has neither given the subject any adequate thought, nor has any sufficient data on which to base an opinion. The reports to which he refers, giving "occupations and mode of life" of graduates, would necessarily be valueless in determining the question whether a classical and literary education had assisted them to commercial success.

ARTHUR T. HADLEY,

*President of Yale University.*

"We regard college education as of great advantage to the business man, as well as the professional man. This is not, however, because it enables him

to make more money, but to have more influence and enjoyment with the same amount of money. It is this broader general object which distinguishes the college course from the purely technological one.

"The evidence is found in the actual position held by our graduates in the various cities in which they live. One of my most important objects in meeting the alumni associations throughout the country was to obtain a thorough basis of judgment on this point. It is obvious, however, that the facts concerning this kind of success are not readily capable of tabulation.

"No systematic effort has been made to compare the success of our graduates in securing positions with the success of any similar body of men who had not been to college.

"We prefer not to publish a list of employers who are in the habit of consulting us.

"Regretting the absence of more detailed information, I remain," etc.

---

President Hadley's letter is refreshingly frank, straightforward, and honest. He concedes the main point for which I am contending, and his reply is commended to the thoughtful consideration of every college student who knows that he must shift for himself in the business world after he graduates.

I agree also with President Hadley that, of two men having the same amount of money, the educated man will derive the greater enjoyment from life. But I go further. I maintain that the college graduate will not make as much in business as he would if he had never gone to college.

FRANCIS L. PATTON,

*President of Princeton University.*

"In reply to your letter of September 5th, I can only say that I believe that those who can afford to obtain a university education should do so no matter what their career is to be. I believe that those who intend to enter commercial life will not regret the years they may have spent in obtaining college education. But I can not answer the specific questions which you present to me, and I have no specific data to give you in reference to the subject."

NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER,

*President of Columbia University.*

"I find myself unable to answer the questions contained in your circular letter of September 5th in detail, but may say that we have here abundant evidence that students who make good use of their opportunities, while undergraduates in college, are eagerly sought for in business positions. The man who does not make good use of his opportunities in college is in the same position as one who has neglected his opportunities elsewhere."

G. STANLEY HALL,

*President of Clark University.*

"I have too little detailed knowledge to answer your questions, and have made no systematic effort to ascertain such as your third question calls for. In general, my opinion is that the utility of an academic career

for business purposes depends largely upon what kind of an academic course is taken. On such a scale I fancy the old classical course would mark very low, and some of the modern technical and commercial courses and many of those in the sciences would mark very high. In these days of the elective system, an 'academic course' has so wide a range of meaning as to be too indefinite to make results of much value, unless they are taken account of."

JAMES B. ANGELL,

*President of the University of Michigan.*

"In answer to your inquiry about the utility of an academic course for young men who expect to pursue a commercial life, I beg leave to say that we have never undertaken to gather any statistics on this point. We know that a good many of our graduates are successful business men. Our general belief about the matter is simply this: that the more a man's intellectual powers are developed, the more capacity he has for any undertaking in life which calls for such powers. In other words, the more of a man one is, the more successful will he be in any worthy enterprise. I have heard business men say that, although it seemed that the time spent in college compelled the graduate to start lower down the scale at the age say of twenty-one, than a young man who had entered as a clerk say at sixteen, yet that the former often showed so much capacity for comprehending new conditions and responsibilities that in the course of a few years he passed the other. I suppose this would not always be true. Much depends upon the personality in either case."

A. S. DRAPER,

*President of the University of Illinois.*

"I am in receipt of your favor of September 5th. The subject to which your questions refer is one which, it seems to me, can not be adequately treated in the way you have adopted. I have no doubt that college training is of substantial value to men engaging in business life. I think the proofs of it are to be found without difficulty, and there are numerous evidences of it coming in one way and another to the officers of this University. At the same time these proofs and evidences can not be presented in form in answer to categorical questions, and, moreover, it would take some time and investigation to bring them together for presentation in any form. I should be very glad indeed to attempt the task when leisure would permit, if there seems to be any general demand for it, but under the circumstances in which I find myself at present I can not attempt it.

"Regretting that I am unable to render you a more substantial service just now, I am," etc.

WILLIAM R. HARPER,

*President of the University of Chicago.*

"Your letter of September 5th was duly received, and I beg to submit answers to the questions of your accompanying circular:

"I. My opinion is that a college education is of decided advantage to young men who propose to enter business. This opinion finds a reflection in the College of Commerce and Administration, which the University of Chicago has established, a circular of which I

send you under separate cover. My opinion is founded upon the theory that a trained mind anywhere is able to do better work than an untrained mind, and while, under certain circumstances, one who is working his way upward in a business from the lower positions may have a practical knowledge not at first possessed by the college graduate, yet, in the long run, at times when critical judgment and prompt decision is required, the one who has the broader outlook in an educational way ought to prove the more valuable.

"2. The evidence in support of this opinion can not, perhaps, be presented specifically, but again and again students have come to the University to get additional training just because they have found that it was possible, in practical experience, for them to advance only so far. A number of cases occur to me in which very able men have given up business positions which paid them well, because of the observation that those who had had better educations were advancing more rapidly and were able to command better salaries.

"3. No systematic effort has been made by the University to ascertain what success college graduates have met with in securing positions, or how successfully they have filled them after getting into business, but from my knowledge of the alumni of the University of Chicago, and of other institutions with which I have been connected, my opinion is that while at the start there has been some disappointment in the realization of ambitions, yet in the main, college graduates who have entered business have been as successful as could be expected.

"4. N. W. Harris & Co., of this city, have made inquiry at the University of Chicago for the names

of any students about to graduate who desire to enter business, and we have been able to refer to them a number of excellent men who were accepted by them on our recommendation, and who now are either employed by them or have been advanced to better positions because of the excellence of work done with them.

“Swift & Co. of this city have employed a large number of graduates of the University of Chicago, and students not graduates, who have been recommended to them by the University authorities. Letters of inquiry of a similar nature are received frequently from other business houses, these two mentioned being perhaps notable.”

BENJAMIN I. WHEELER,

*President of the University of California.*

“It is difficult to answer your letter of the 5th inst., because it is uncertain what you mean by ‘academic course.’ Within our academic course is included, for instance, work in mining, electricity, mechanics, etc. We put these studies on the same level with the humanistic studies leading to the degree of B. A.

“I think there is evidence that an education in commercial branches or in engineering is serviceable for young men about to enter a commercial life. I think there is lack of evidence on the subject of the more general course of study, with the presumption against it.”

In addition to the letter above quoted, he replies in the negative to the question whether he has made any systematic effort to ascertain what success college graduates have met with in securing positions, and how successful they have been after going into business.



*The answers from the next four gentlemen are quoted as given on the inquiry sheet sent to them.*

GEORGE MACLEAN,

*President of the University of Iowa.*

In reply to the question whether, in his opinion, there is any evidence that such education is of advantage to this class of young men, he says: "Decidedly Yes."

To the request for evidence upon this point, he answers: "Statistics of 'Who's Who,' articles by President Thwing, and observation in my circle of acquaintances."

He states that no systematic effort has been made to ascertain what success such college graduates have met with in securing positions, or how successful they have been after going into business.

In answer to the question whether he could name any employers who, when seeking employes, are in the habit of applying to colleges, he says: "Applications not infrequent."

EDWARD H. GRIFFIN,

*Dean of the College Faculty of Johns Hopkins University.*

President Ira Remsen of the Johns Hopkins University stated that, as he had just assumed office and had had no experience that would help him to answer the questions, he had referred the inquiry to Edward H. Griffin, Dean of the College Faculty. This gentleman replied as below.

To the question whether there is, in his opinion, any evidence that such education is of any advantage

to this class of young men, he answers: "Yes," the evidence being, as he states: "The successful careers of the vast majority of college graduates."

In reply to the question whether he has made any systematic effort to ascertain what success such college graduates have met with in securing positions, and how successful they have been after going into business, he says: "I have made no such effort, but have followed the subsequent lives of most of my students and have been struck with the small percentage of failures."

The question whether he can mention any employers who apply to colleges when seeking help, he answers in the negative.

### E. BENJAMIN ANDREWS,

*Chancellor of the University of Nebraska.*

He replies "yes" to the question whether, in his opinion, such education is of any advantage to this class of young men, and in response to the request for this evidence, he says: "They get higher positions, as a rule. This is not the highest advantage. The highest advantage is that they have an inner life of enjoyment in reading, thinking, and understanding things."

Replying to the question whether he has made any systematic effort to ascertain what success such college men have met with in securing positions, he says: "No effort is needed to one in my business; the facts are obvious."

As to how successful they have been after going into business, he replies: "In the main, highly so." He further remarks: "Take a period of twenty or thirty years after graduation, and the well educated

get and keep positions far more securely and regularly than others of the same ages."

To the question whether he could mention any employers who are in the habit of applying to colleges when in need of help, he answers: "Yes, I could name a considerable number."

When I wrote to President Andrews, requesting the names of this "considerable number," he replied that he guessed he had made it a little too strong; that he could name only two, and one of them was dead!

### DAVID STARR JORDAN,

*President of the Leland Stanford, Jr., University.*

In answer to the question whether, in his opinion, there is any evidence that such education is of any advantage to this class of young men, he says: "Such an education is of daily advantage to any man of brains and character."

When asked for evidence on this point, he replies: "It gives not always better wages, but a broader horizon, a more refined taste, a saner judgment, and a higher range of friends."

Answering the question whether he had made any systematic effort to ascertain the success such college graduates have met with in securing positions, and how successful they have been after going into business, he says: "Every one in any field finds a place as good as he is fit for, experience being also considered. I keep pretty close watch of our own graduates and know of no failures, but our graduates are too young to show many notable cases; the first class was graduated in 1895."

In reply to the question whether he can mention

any employers who are in the habit of applying to colleges when in need of help, he says: "Employers desiring engineers or teachers frequently make such applications."

#### WHAT THE REPLIES SHOW.

President Hadley of Yale University, President Wheeler of the University of California, and President Hall of Clark University are the only ones who are frank enough to admit that the presumption is against the practical utility of an academic course for business men.

The others all appear to be positive that such education is of benefit to men in commercial life, but when asked for evidence to support this claim, few have attempted to furnish it, and such information as these few have offered is found, upon investigation, to amount to nothing.

I leave it to the public to judge whether the heads of these institutions have a proper appreciation of the importance of making accurate statements on this subject. There is nothing in their letters to show that they have made a systematic effort to ascertain the true condition of the question; in fact, it is doubtful whether they have made any effort at all in this direction.

It certainly would not do for a business man to conduct his affairs in this way. He must at all times be in a position to defend the quality of the goods he produces, and if he makes false statements about them, he very soon finds that it has a disastrous effect on his business.

## THE OPINIONS OF COLLEGE GRADUATES.

Next will be found a copy of an inquiry sent to the members of classes that had been graduated about seven years before from the following institutions :

<i>Yale University.</i>	<i>University of Pennsylvania.</i>
<i>Harvard University.</i>	<i>University of Illinois.</i>
<i>Cornell University.</i>	<i>University of Iowa.</i>
<i>Columbia University.</i>	<i>University of Minnesota.</i>
<i>Princeton University.</i>	<i>University of Wisconsin.</i>
<i>University of Chicago.</i>	<i>University of Nebraska.</i>
<i>University of Rochester.</i>	<i>University of California.</i>

## A COPY OF THE LETTER SENT TO COLLEGE GRADUATES.

The utility of an academic education for young men who have to earn their own living, and who expect to pursue a commercial life.

*Dear Sir:*

*In connection with a paper that I am preparing upon this subject, I am desirous of obtaining from college graduates some definite information regarding the points mentioned on enclosed sheet.*

*Those whom I particularly wish to hear from are the graduates who entered upon a commercial career and were obliged to start out to make their own way in the world without the influence of either family or friends — in other words, without what is commonly called a "Pull."*

*Not knowing the conditions that have surrounded the various members of your class in college, I am sending this letter to each of them.*

*Of course, if you do not come under the list above referred to, your answers to these questions are not*

*desired, but in that event I should be very glad if you would advise me of such fact.*

*The subject I am investigating is one of so much interest and importance that I sincerely hope all to whom this letter applies will assist in this effort to arrive at a solution of the matter by furnishing the desired information.*

*Thanking you in advance for your kind attention to this request, I am*      *Yours truly,* R. T. CRANE.

#### THE QUESTIONS ASKED.

1. When did you leave college?
2. When did you first take a position after leaving college?
3. How many positions have you held?
4. Length of time in each position?
5. What was the nature of your work in the various positions?
6. Salary received in first position?
7. Present salary?
8. Was your college education of any advantage to you in obtaining a situation?
9. Has it been of benefit to you in the performance of your duties and in securing advancement?
10. What, in your opinion, would have been your position to-day, as compared with the place you now hold, had you, instead of going to college, started at that time in a position similar to the one you did obtain after leaving college?
11. If you had your life to live over, would you take a college course in preference to starting in business that much earlier?

### THE REPLIES AND CERTAIN DEDUCTIONS.

<i>Total number of letters sent to college graduates,</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,593
<i>Letters returned undelivered,</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	129
<i>Answers received,</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	555
<i>Number not replying,</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	909

Of the 555 answers received, 490 were from students who have either taken up a professional or technical line of work, or who state that they do not come within the scope of this investigation.

This leaves only sixty-five letters from the class of young men whom I particularly desired to reach, which is so small a proportion of the whole that the information furnished by them does not throw much light upon the subject. I will, however, tabulate their replies so that the public may see what they have to say.

In regard to the question concerning their present income, fourteen do not answer at all and twenty state that they are in business for themselves. The replies from the remaining thirty-one show that nearly all are doing very well on this score.

The question whether a college education has been of benefit to them, in the performance of their duties and in securing advancement, is answered in the affirmative by fifty, and in the negative by seven. The others give no information upon this point.

To the question whether their college education was of any advantage to them in obtaining a situation, thirty-two answer "yes," and twenty-seven "no." The remainder either state that they do not know or make no reply whatever.

When we consider the general spirit of loyalty toward the colleges which the students have exhibited in their letters, the fact that nearly one-half of the answers to this question are in the negative would

seem to be sufficient evidence to settle this matter to the satisfaction of every one.

In answer to the question — what, in their opinion, would have been their position to-day, as compared with the place they now hold, had they, instead of going to college, started at that time in a position similar to the one they did obtain after leaving college — twenty-seven believe it would have been inferior, fourteen that it would have been better, and thirteen that it would have been about the same.

#### LOYALTY TO THE COLLEGE.

Sixty out of the sixty-five say that, if they had their lives to live over, they would take a college course; for even those who admit that they would be better off financially if they had not gone to college, claim that whatever they lose in this respect is more than compensated for by the college experience and the increased capacity which it has given them for enjoying life. An extreme instance of this is seen in the case of one of these young men who states that upon leaving college he had neither pull nor capital; that he thinks his college experience was of no material or direct benefit to him in securing a position; that he finally drifted into the cattle business out West, in which he was unsuccessful, and that he is now out of a position. Notwithstanding all this, and admitting, as he does, that had he continued in business instead of going to college, his financial condition undoubtedly would have been better than it is to-day, he says:

“I think I am safe in saying that if I had the decision to make over again I should again take the college education. It may not make great returns on



the investment in actual money, but to the man who has the taste and determination it makes, I feel, adequate returns in the enlarged field he is given for the pursuits of his life with happiness to himself, and with some benefit to those about him."

In further illustration of this feeling, I refer to a letter from a young man who has gone into the banking business, and whose statements are quoted elsewhere in connection with another branch of the subject. While he frankly acknowledges that his college education does not compensate for the lack of practical training, and that, so far as his business is concerned, he would be better off if he had remained at home, still he says that, if he had his life to live over again, he would certainly go to college, "Since the satisfaction of a broader life makes up for financial loss."

#### VALUE OF THE EVIDENCE.

Inasmuch as it is highly probable that the replies received represent that part of the 1,593 men addressed who are able to make the most favorable report, it may be fairly assumed that the sixty-five letters which are pertinent to our inquiry constitute the best showing which can be made on the affirmative side. From this point of view they can hardly be regarded as very strong evidence of the college graduate's success in business.

But this evidence, such as it is, becomes still weaker in view of the nature of the replies made to the last question. It is evident that sixty out of the sixty-five believe that the intellectual advantages coming to them from college education are more valuable than financial success, and this bias has doubtless influenced

their judgment in replying to questions 8, 9 and 10. For it is to be noticed that, in the answers to 8, 9 and 10, we have no particulars or facts, but only the vague general judgment of the writers.

Much more to the point are the positive statements by several that they really found a strong feeling among business men against employing college graduates, and that they were actually at a disadvantage on that account.

#### PREJUDICE AGAINST COLLEGE GRADUATES.

As one of them remarks, "The man who has been trained to do certain work, says: 'Will you hire me? I can do this work.' College graduates can only ask for a chance to try to do it." \* \* \* "Judging from my own experience, a graduate of college who should try to make his way in the world in commercial life, absolutely without influence of family or friends, would stand a poor chance in competition with the young man of equal age who had received a thorough business training."

Another, who upon leaving college, took up newspaper work and is now proprietor of a paper, says: "I belong most decidedly to the class you mention. In entering upon my business life, after completing my course, I found a strong feeling against the 'College Graduate.' I was actually at a disadvantage due to this prejudice. I have always guarded against any reference to my college work when in business circles, feeling that it was the discretion that is 'the better part of valor.' Of course, I am persuaded the drill at college has enabled me to make progress and enjoy to-day a broader life than would have been possible without it."

## CONFLICTING OPINIONS OF TWO GRADUATES.

As an example of the conflicting opinions held by men in the same line of business, with regard to the benefits of a college education in a commercial life, I quote from letters received from two students who are now engaged in banking.

The first upon leaving college became connected with a bank which his father (who received only a common-school education) had already built up into a successful concern. This young man says:

"Whatever success I may have received I attribute entirely to my course at college, where I learned to judge human nature in a way I could never have acquired elsewhere; also, the methods used to learn the college lessons I have been able to apply to other things and arrive at a rapid and accurate conclusion. I was also taught self-reliance, and to stick to a thing until it was accomplished."

His opinion of what his position would be to-day, had he started in business at the time he entered college, is expressed as follows:

"I would have been an undeveloped, narrow-minded bank clerk, and would never have achieved any of the success I may have done. College taught me to judge human nature, the most important thing in banking."

This letter might seem, on superficial consideration, to constitute strong evidence for the affirmative, but most of its strength evaporates after more careful perusal. What the writer has to say about being an "undeveloped, narrow-minded bank clerk" if he had not gone to college, shows plainly that he, also, is confounding intellectual advantages with financial suc-

cess. Our investigation has to do with the latter only, and not with the former.

The rest of what he says is more to the point, but the question whether college is a better place for learning self-reliance and knowledge of human nature than the business world, is considered fully on page 90.

The other banker says: "I unfortunately work in my father's bank, holding a position my education did not especially fit me for. Had I foreseen a business career, I am certain the college education I received could have been combined with other work that would have been of immense advantage to me. A literary and scientific education does not compensate me for the lack of practical knowledge."

In regard to the question whether a college education has been a benefit to him in the performance of his duties, etc., he says: "No and Yes — my general information has helped me, but my lack of special and local knowledge has hurt."

With regard to his probable position had he not gone to college, he says:

"In a country bank thorough knowledge of local conditions and acquaintance with people, with proper clerical experience, is everything. I would be better off in this respect if I had staid at home."

#### FAILURE TO REPLY.

I particularly requested in my letter to college men that all to whom this inquiry did not apply take the trouble to so inform me, for which purpose a return envelope, stamped and addressed, was enclosed. As so many who did reply seem to have been prompted by a spirit of fraternal feeling and of loyalty toward col-

leges to go out of their way in order to say a good word for these institutions, I think it is proper to infer that the large number who refrained from answering had been unsuccessful in business and feared that an acknowledgment of this fact would be used to the disadvantage of colleges. Owing to their feeling of loyalty, they would not like to see this done.

#### SECOND LETTER OF INQUIRY.

After the publication of the first edition of this book, Mr. A. C. Bartlett, in a letter to the *Chicago Tribune*, of February 4, 1902, took exception to the foregoing remarks regarding the young men who failed to answer my original inquiry, claiming that "in these days of printed circular letters upon all manner of subjects, the failure of a thousand to respond should hardly be attributed to a want of success." In order to find out, if possible, something about those graduates, I then sent out letters of inquiry regarding them to people living in their vicinity.

This later investigation brought in only 353 replies that contained any information, and as in most cases the answers were very incomplete and unsatisfactory, it is of little value in the consideration of this subject. There is nothing in it to cause me to change the opinion expressed above regarding these young men.

## PART TWO.

### OPINIONS OF BUSINESS MEN.

The preceding pages have given the reader the best argument which can be produced in favor of a classical and literary education for business men by the most prominent advocates thereof. But these need to be supplemented by the opinions of employers and practical business men.

For the judgments of college presidents on such a subject are of necessity altogether theoretical, even when they are not biased. In all probability no one of them has ever been obliged to go into the open labor market as a graduate and compete with hundreds of others for a strictly business position; nor has he been an employer in strictly commercial lines. No man can be fully competent to understand, or to give reliable advice upon, the subject before us who has never had actual business experience either as employer or employe.

Even the replies of business men, as shown in the following pages, are often so indefinite as to be of no value for our purpose. No dependence can be placed on any of them who fail to make their practice consistent with their theories. The student who should be influenced by their letters to go to college in the expectation that he would be able to graduate into a good business position, would find out too late that he had been woefully deceived.

COPY OF LETTER SENT OUT TO ONE HUNDRED  
BUSINESS MEN.

The utility of an academic education for young men who have to earn their own living and who expect to pursue a commercial life.

*Dear Sir:*

*I am preparing a paper on the above subject, and as I am desirous of ascertaining what the facts actually show with regard to the value of such education to young men who take up a commercial life, I am sending this letter to a number of the leading and representative men in various lines of business.*

*Please bear in mind that this inquiry has reference to whether or not this education is a help to the success of such young men from a COMMERCIAL STANDPOINT ONLY.*

*This subject, which is one of the greatest importance, has been theorized upon too long. I am now endeavoring, in what I believe to be a straightforward businesslike way, to get at its real status, and I feel it is due to the young men of this country who contemplate taking a college course that those who have practical ideas about the matter should assist in its solution by answering these questions with great care.*

*If any have theories regarding it that they are not acting upon in their own business, there is no objection to their stating them at the close of their letter, but what I am particularly desirous of obtaining is a reply to my questions.*

*The persons I am aiming to reach are those who employ the help and have made a study of the subject, and should this letter get into the hands of others, I would request that they refer it to the one in their*

*establishment best qualified to furnish the desired information.*

*It must be borne in mind that this inquiry does not have reference to the effect of education upon particularly bright boys, but simply the general run of them. Neither is consideration to be given to any regret which some especially successful men may feel because of not having received more education. These matters do not come within the range of this investigation.*

*Thanking you in advance for your attention to this request, I am*

*Yours truly,*

R. T. CRANE.

#### THE QUESTIONS ASKED.

1. Have you any college men among your employees?
2. If so, what proportion are they of your entire force of the same class, or of all classes of help in which such persons would likely be utilized?
3. [a] In selecting help, do you give preference to college men?  
[b] Or do you avoid them?
4. If you favor such men, is it your experience that they make better help than persons of about the same caliber who have no college education — that is, on account of having received such education?  
[a] Do they show greater mental ability?  
[b] Do they advance more rapidly?  
[c] Are they generally of better character?
5. [a] If you believe that the mental training



which a young man receives in college tends to improve him and make him more valuable to you in your business, have you made a practice, when seeking employes, of applying to the heads of colleges for information concerning students about to graduate, and selecting help from those whom they might recommend?

[b] If not, why?

(6th, 7th and 8th stricken out.)

9. Do you consider that there is need of more than a grammar-school education in a general business life?
10. Will not the work and experience that a young man obtains in any line of business develop the mental qualities required in that business fully as much as would a course in college?
11. Estimating that it costs in the neighborhood of \$5,000 to go through college, would you advise a young man who had only this amount of money, to spend it for a college education?
12. If you favor those who have had a college education, then take the case of two young men of equal age and mental caliber, one of whom (having had simply a grammar-school education) starts in business and the other goes to college. At the time the latter leaves college (assuming that the other were then worth \$1,200 a year to you), if it were possible to make a twenty-year contract with each of these young men for his services, how much more would you be

willing to pay the college man for the twenty years?

(It should be remembered that the first young man has had about six years' experience in the business at the time the latter leaves college.)

13. Can you give me the names of any business men who are large employers of this class of help, and whose opinion upon this subject would be valuable?

Some of the replies from business men were short and clear-cut, and these are given in full. But in others the writers introduced so many conditions and complications that to quote their letters in full would be very confusing, and in order to avoid this I have given simply a brief synopsis of these replies.

#### THE REPLIES AND CERTAIN DEDUCTIONS.

MR. M. B. WALLACE,

*Secretary of Samuel Cupples Wooden Ware Company,  
St. Louis, Mo.*

Instead of quoting Mr. Wallace's answers to the various questions, I give a copy of the letter received from him, as this seems to express his views more clearly:

"Your circular letter of September 5th has been received, and I take pleasure in answering your inquiries on the subject of education of young men, and in further explaining my views on this subject will say that the greatest difficulty I have had in employing college men has been that, while they say when they want employment that they are anxious to get down

at the bottom of the ladder and work their way up, still if they do not find themselves advanced more rapidly than is consistent with either good business or fairness to the other employes, who are in all probability just as capable as they are, they become dissatisfied, and do not think they are getting along fast enough.

"The mistake most of them make is that they have an idea they are smarter and are above the average class of employes, which immediately places them at a disadvantage, as the feeling of course is promptly resented by the other employes, and, in whatever way they can, they make it harder for the college man to get along.

"As a general proposition, I would prefer not to have a college man, unless I was satisfied that it was necessary for him to work and that he would not become dissatisfied too soon and want to change because he was not getting along fast enough.

"Your twelfth inquiry is one that is, to my mind, very hard to answer, and I do not believe that I or anybody else could even make a fair guess at which would be the more valuable man of the two at the end of twenty years. My impression, however, is that if the young man was doing his work in a thoroughly satisfactory manner, I would prefer him rather than to take the risk on the latter.

"In summing up the whole situation, the college man, to my mind, is only a desirable employe when he is, as a few college men are, conscientious, hard working, and willing to get down at the bottom and stay there for a sufficient length of time to work his way up."

He gives their proportion of college men as about five per cent.

MR. J. J. DAU,

*Vice-President of Reid, Murdoch & Company,  
Chicago, Ill.*

Instead of answering the specific questions, Mr. Dau writes the following letter :

“ Referring to your recent inquiry upon the subject of university or higher education, we beg to say that, perhaps singularly enough, there has never been a college graduate at work in our forces. As far as expedient, we begin with boys at the age of sixteen and train them gradually to the field for which they show most efficiency. When employing a person later in life, it is naturally for certain duties in which he must have acquired training and experience elsewhere ; but even then, and with all due respect, we obtain better results three times out of four from a man who has gained his knowledge in our own house. For a young man of more than average ability, we are in favor of the best education and plenty of it, but as you go down the scale the situation alters, and sometimes, as the saying is, ‘ a good shoemaker is spoiled to make a poor preacher.’ ”

MR. F. H. PEABODY,

*of Kidder, Peabody & Company, Boston.*

“ The chance of getting himself successfully established in business, seems to me better for a young man who goes into a business establishment on graduating from school, say at the age of seventeen or eighteen, than that of a man who spends the four years from seventeen to twenty-one in college, and the chances of being efficient up to a certain point seem to me better

than those of the college student. Coming to a higher grade of work, the chances seem to me about equal.

“Probably the management of our railroads illustrate as high a grade as any of business and executive ability, and the greatest managers of railroads in this country are men who, I believe, never had any college education. Edgar Thomson, President Roberts, Cornelius Vanderbilt, James F. Joy, C. P. Huntington, Mr. Plant and James J. Hill are instances, and Mr. Schwab, of the Steel Trust, I believe to be another in a different line.

“But, if a man has the qualities which carry him up to the top in business, the college education seems to me likely to give him a line of valuable acquaintances, more tact in dealing with his fellow men, and more capacity for enjoying the intellectual part of life, than if he had grown up without it.”

#### MR. EDWARD TOWNSEND,

*Cashier Importers' & Traders' National Bank, New York.*

I quote from his letter as follows:

“Of our entire force of over one hundred clerks we think we have but two college graduates, and they passed through one of the smaller colleges many years ago, and finished the course at a very early age.

“Our method, when we need to increase our force, has been for many years to take in boys just from school, of about sixteen years of age, without any previous business experience, and train them in our own methods, promoting them from time to time as the opportunity presents itself. This plan has worked very satisfactorily with us. We have found that the

best material for our purpose has come from the middle class young men who have to work to make a living. Other things being equal, we of course, in selecting young men, take into consideration the education they have received, but at the age they enter our employ they are usually too young to have completed a college course."

**MR. JAMES B. FORGAN,**

*President of the First National Bank, Chicago.*

Mr. Forgan takes the ground that: "More depends on the man than his early education. A man's schooling is after all the smallest part of his education," and it seems to be his rule to look to the man rather than to his education.

He has taken considerable pains to ascertain the proportion of college men in his bank, and finds that it is from three and one-half to five and one-half per cent.

He says that they do not give preference to nor do they avoid college men; that they do not find that such men show greater mental ability or advance more rapidly than persons of about the same caliber who have not received a college education.

While his answer to the question "will not the work and experience a young man obtains in any line of business develop the mental qualities required in that business fully as much as would a course in college?" is in the affirmative, and while he also says that he would not advise a young man who had only \$5,000 to spend it for a college education, if he intended to enter upon a business career, he still thinks that there

is need of more than a grammar-school education in a general business life.

MR. ROSWELL MILLER,

*Chairman of the Board of the Chicago, Milwaukee &  
St. Paul R. R., New York.*

Mr. Miller's answers to the questions all show that he is very decidedly of the opinion that a college education is of no value to a man in a business life.

In closing he makes this remark :

" I spent one year in college, and I consider it fortunate that it was not more."

MR. W. F. MERRILL,

*First Vice-President of the New York, New Haven &  
Hartford R. R. Company, New Haven, Conn.*

Mr. Merrill kindly answered the questions and also wrote several long letters, from which I quote the following :

" It has been my experience that men with a college education make better help than men of about the same caliber who have not had that advantage, when they get to a point where their experience warrants putting them into advanced positions, and that it does not take them so long a time to get to a point where they can be safely promoted. A college education gives a young man habits of study and application which are invaluable. He learns how to use his brains to better advantage than one who has not had that training. You might just as well say that an apprenticeship is of no value to a man who is going to follow a particular trade as to say, in the case of a man who is going to use

his brains, it is not an advantage to him that he should learn how to use them logically by study. Brains are capable of development the same as muscles, and there is nothing that I know of that will develop brains any faster than systematic study. A well-trained mind thinks quicker and reaches results more speedily and more accurately. My experience is that educated men show greater mental ability for the reason that I have given above; that they can advance more rapidly, because they learn how to take advantage of the knowledge of others better, and because their education broadens their intellect. It also stimulates ambition and strengthens character. I can not see why the broadening of a man's mind, even along general lines, should not help a person in a business career just as much as a professional one. The training and study of a college education simply lays the foundation upon which a young man, who afterward goes into life, has to build the superstructure, and surely a college education strengthens that foundation to a very great degree. Of course a railroad prefers to employ men who have taken the course laid down in the technical colleges, but an academic course is exceedingly valuable to any young man who has a desire to rise above the average level."

Mr. Merrill goes on to say that he does not think college men have been given an equal chance in large business concerns. I requested him to ascertain the number of college men he had among the station agents on one of the main divisions of his road, to which he replied that they had in the neighborhood of nine hundred stations, and he was quite sure that none of the station agents were college graduates.



MR. LUCIUS TUTTLE,  
*President of the Boston & Maine Railroad,  
Boston, Mass.*

Mr. Tuttle does not answer the questions in detail, but writes the following letter :

" We have college men among our employes, but I am unable to tell you what proportion they constitute of our entire force of all classes of help.

" In selecting help we should give preference to a college-educated man, all other things being equal, and we have no prejudice against them.

" As a general thing, we find college-bred men capable of reaching a higher standard in the service in shorter time than those who lack the mental training that goes with education, *provided* they are willing to take hold in a subordinate place and work as others are willing to work who have not had their advantages. They, of course, show greater mental ability and advance more rapidly; and so far as we select them they are, I think, generally of better character."

MR. GEORGE B. HARRIS,  
*President of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy  
Railroad Company, Chicago, Ill.*

Mr. Harris made a very full reply to the questions, but misunderstood the particular line of my inquiry, and got a college education mixed up with other lines of education, so that a number of his answers do not apply.

In reply to the question whether he gives preference to college men, he says: " We select those applicants who, all things considered, appear to be the most desirable."

He is not so sure that college men show greater mental ability, but it is his impression that they are better trained and that they rise more rapidly than persons who have not attended college.

He says they have *some* college men among their employes, but that he can not give the proportion, as no tally has been kept.

In one of his letters he makes this statement:

"All things being equal, it is obvious that education is beneficial alike to employer and employe. Many men of unusually strong character and ability and little education, realizing their disadvantages, sometimes overcome them by diligence and pass well-educated but indolent men in the business race. This may mislead some people. There is no doubt, in my mind, that a good education is desirable and more necessary now than ever before."

MR. JOHN C. WELLING,

*Vice-President of the Illinois Central Railroad Company,  
Chicago, Ill.*

My inquiry was first sent to the president of this road, Mr. Stuyvesant Fish, whose answers showed that he was in favor of college graduates; but thinking more detailed information might be obtained from Mr. Welling, a copy of the letter was sent to him, and the following is the substance of his reply.

He thinks that: "If young men are studious, the mental training received in college strengthens them"; that college men "are fitted to fill more important positions, and can frequently be promoted more rapidly than men who have not had like advantages"; and that "they are apt to be broader and stronger men and so better men."

In answer to the question whether he gives preference to college men, he says: "In some positions, yes; in most positions, no."

Notwithstanding his rather broad statement in favor of college education, he says the proportion of college men in their employ is very small, and that they do not apply to colleges when in need of help, the reason for this being: "It has never occurred to us to do so; besides, we always have numerous applications from young men fresh from college for positions of one sort or other."

He believes that there is need of more than a grammar-school education in general business life, and says that, "the necessity increases as the years go by."

He thinks that, as a rule, the work and experience a young man obtains in any line of business will not develop the mental qualities required in that business as much as would a course in college.

He "would not advise the average young man" (which, of course, is the sort of person to which this investigation applies) "whose means are limited to \$5,000, to spend it all in taking a regular academic course in college."

In reply to my subsequent inquiry as to the number of college men among the station agents on one of the main divisions of his road, he says that out of 199, eight took a partial course in college, and nine took a full college course.

MR. E. P. RIPLEY,

*President of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway  
System, Chicago, Ill.*

Mr. Ripley's replies seem to refer mainly to men having a technical education, and for that line of

work he favors a college course. He does not answer any of the questions directly, and I have no means of judging whether he is consistent in this matter or not.

With regard to the proportion of college men in their employ, he says: "We have quite a number of college graduates among our 35,000 or more employes, but of course they constitute a very small percentage of the whole."

It seems to me that if he were consistent he would have made a special effort to give more information on this point.

In his letter he says:

"I am of the opinion that college graduates are better equipped for general work, mental caliber and habits being the same, than non-collegiates.

"Their mental processes are more likely to be accurate; they have generally a clearer perception of the fitness of things, and can meet the public and deal with other men upon rather a better plane than a man who has not been through college.

"Having thus answered your questions as put, let me hasten to say that I am by no means of the opinion that every young man should be sent to college. While, as above stated, I would ordinarily give a college graduate the preference, yet it must be remembered that the four years spent in college, if spent in practical work, may result at the end of that time in giving a *practical* knowledge of a given business, which is better for the purpose of that particular business than a college education, and that *all* young men are not students, and many do not derive much benefit from a college course."

MR. MARVIN HUGHITT,  
*President of the Chicago & North-Western Railway Company,  
Chicago, Ill.*

Mr. Hughitt says he can not reply with accuracy to my questions, not having the necessary information, and it is evident that this matter is one which has not interested him, nor received his attention.

I quote from his letter as follows:

"The selection of help is made with regard to the applicant's competency for the position.

"I may say generally, however, that it is my conviction that a young man can not get too good an education. Whether it is to the disadvantage of a young man to devote the time necessary in obtaining a collegiate education, in preference to going at once into railroad or other work, depends to a very great degree, if not wholly, upon the 'make-up' of the young man. And in the consideration of the advisability of the one course or the other, this question of the kind of 'timber' a young man may be becomes a most important factor, in my judgment, in reaching a conclusion, considered both with regard to his school life and to his discharge of the duties pertaining to whatever line of work he may undertake."

MR. E. C. SIMMONS,  
*of the Simmons Hardware Company, St. Louis, Mo.*

Mr. Simmons writes at considerable length, and when I say that he expresses himself very strongly on every phase of the question as being in favor of college education for business men, it is stating his position as exactly as if I quoted his entire letter.

I will simply say further that he states that a very

small proportion of their force are college men, his reason being: "Comparatively speaking, there are but few people in St. Louis who send their sons to college, and the number applying for places is very limited."

His correspondence develops the fact that he has been of his present opinion with regard to college men for only about three years.

MR. A. C. BARTLETT,

*Vice-President of Hibbard, Spencer, Bartlett & Company,  
Chicago, Ill.*

Among his answers to the questions Mr. Bartlett says:

"First, considering what we deem natural qualifications, we give college-bred men the preference.

"We think college discipline a benefit. While they may not show greater mental *ability*, they do show mental *training*; as a consequence they advance more rapidly."

Although his letters seem to indicate that he is very strongly of the opinion that college education is of value to young men, he apparently has not followed his theory in practice, for he says that they have few college men in their employ, the proportion being very small.

MR. F. C. SMINK,

*Vice-President and General Manager of the Reading Iron  
Company, Reading, Penn.*

Mr. Smink does not answer the questions specifically, but writes a long letter from which I quote as follows:

"I am decidedly of the opinion that what Chaun-

cey M. Depew (who has written and expressed his views at more or less length upon this subject) is quoted as saying is absolutely true, to-wit: 'Any young man equipped with a college education increases his chances of making a living and of a more rapid promotion in any line of business, two hundred to three hundred per cent, given that he possesses the requisite amount of industry, energy, and persistent application that characterize every successful business man.'

"We have comparatively few college-bred men employed in the many varied industries under my direction and control, and their proportion to the whole is almost infinitesimal. Yet in all new applications I invariably give preferential hearing to those graduated from some academic or collegiate institution. In the clerical or office field I now make it a rule that none be engaged, even down to the grade of office boy, who shall not at least be possessed of a high-school education. \* \* \* \*

"One of the difficulties often met with in considering the applications of college graduates, even though they are poor and obliged to earn their own living, is that so many are unwilling to undergo that apprenticeship or preliminary training in acquiring the details of any service which is so necessary to fit them for higher offices. The drudgery and toil involved they seem to regard as menial, and generally want to start in on a higher rung of the ladder than their qualifications entitle them to. For this reason I think we are inclined to give preference, in our selections for advancement, to the men who rise from the ranks and who have become familiar with all the degrees and stages of manufacture, or have mastered the details of offices and counting rooms, rather than to the men whose mental attributes,

by reason of their higher education, may appear more brilliant and promising.

“Whether these lofty and erroneous ideas are inculcated by present methods of training or the surrounding influences of our educational institutions I shall not attempt to say, but be that as it may, I think it has been clearly established that in all branches of finance, commerce, or manufacture the value of a college education invariably asserts itself.”

MR. T. J. HYMAN,

*Secretary and Treasurer Illinois Steel Company,  
Chicago, Ill.*

Specific answers are not given by Mr. Hyman, but in his letter he takes the view that the scope of my inquiry is too narrow.

He seems to think that for ordinary lines of business or office work a grammar-school education is sufficient, but that for more advanced positions a college education is essential, and that it would pay a young man to spend the time and money necessary to acquire it.

However, for the class of men referred to in this investigation, he makes the following suggestion:

“In my own judgment, the ideal course for a young man who is dependent upon his own efforts, with the facilities that are now offered for study at home, is for him to engage in his chosen line of business and take up a course of reading or study whereby he can gain technical and practical knowledge at the same time, and at the end of the given period of years he will be worth more to his employers than after the same number of years' study in college.”



MR. CYRUS H. McCORMICK,

*President of the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company,  
Chicago, Ill.*

Mr. McCormick did not answer the questions in detail, but wrote two or three brief letters, from which I quote the following:

"In general, I may say that we have many college men among our employes, but they would form only a small proportion of those engaged in similar work. In selecting help we certainly would not avoid college men, but would rather give them the preference, believing that they would make quicker progress and show a better all-around ability than those who had not had the advantages of a college education.

"With the same endowment and under the same environment and with the same opportunities, I should expect a college man to win over the man who had not had such advantages."

MR. FRANKLIN MAC VEAGH,

*of Franklin Mac Veagh & Co., Chicago, Ill.*

In reply to the question whether college men make better help than persons of about the same caliber who have not had a college education, he says that, "other things being equal, a college education is an advantage"—same old chestnut!

He thinks college graduates do not show greater mental ability; "only more mental discipline, supposing natural abilities the same," and that they advance more rapidly.

In reply to the question whether he considers that

there is need of more than a grammar-school education in a general business life, he says: "I do not think you can get too much education in business life."

Notwithstanding the fact that the foregoing answers would indicate that he rather favors a college education, he states that the proportion of college men in their employ is "very small indeed," and that he does not give such men preference when selecting help. Therefore his preference for college education falls flat.

MR. A. ANTISDEL,

*General Manager of the American Express  
Company, Chicago, Ill.*

The letter from Mr. Antisdel seems to state his position so clearly that I quote it instead of giving his specific answers to the questions:

"This company employs comparatively few college men, and for the reason that we employ men of a younger age who have finished their course in common or high schools, and such men who show an aptitude are promoted from time to time, and most of the important positions of this company to-day are held by men who have not had the benefit of a college education, and who have risen from the ranks. While we have but few college men in our service, I believe the employes of the American Express Company are, as a rule, of a very high standard and will compare favorably with men occupying like positions in any other class of business. When we have occasion to take into our service new men of legal age, we should, everything else being equal, give the preference to the college men, for the reason that I believe their minds are better trained, and they acquire a knowledge of the

business more rapidly and more comprehensively than men who have not had a college training.

“As to the character and habits of college men, I do not think they are any better than the class of men employed by this company, and the principal reason why I should give preference to college men is that, as before stated, their minds are better trained, and they are able to acquire a knowledge of our business quicker and more comprehensively than men of limited education, and, further, such college men have the capacity to expand and grow with the business and ultimately be qualified for occupying any position in the gift of the company.”

In his answers to the questions he states that he does not make a practice of applying to colleges when in need of help, and gives as a reason the fact that until recently he has not given the subject any particular attention.

## ARMOUR & COMPANY,

### *Chicago, Ill.*

The person replying does not answer the questions specifically, but has this to say in a general way:

“While not giving especial preference to college men, we feel that such education, when coupled with energy, adaptability in special directions, with other qualifications which always render employes desirable, has a tendency to add greatly to general efficiency. \* \* \* In selections for positions which do not involve expert training, we do not give preference to college men, as such.”

MR. D. R. KINGSLEY,

*Third Vice-President New York Life Insurance Company,  
New York.*

He says he is unable to answer the questions, but writes in a general way as follows:

"College-bred men do not enter the company's service through the same avenue and do not begin at the same age, and there is almost no way in which anything like a fair comparison can be instituted between the two.

"We neither discriminate in favor of or against college-bred men.

"Of course, amongst the men who enter the company's service as office boys, there are no college-bred men. In the nature of things there could not be. These men make up our greatest source of supply.

"We, however, engage first and last a good many college-bred men, and our experience with them, in the particular line of work they are set to do, has been entirely satisfactory."

MR. MILTON H. SMITH,

*President of the Louisville & Nashville R. R. Company,  
Louisville.*

Mr. Smith writes as follows:

"I am not in a position to reply to the questions propounded, for the reason that this company fills all positions in the service by promotion of employees; only their fitness for the position in view being taken into account."

MR. H. B. LEDYARD,

*President of the Michigan Central Railroad Company,  
Detroit, Mich.*

The writer does not answer the questions. He puts special stress, however, upon the scientific course, and does not give his views regarding an academic education.

MR. A. S. WEINSHEIMER,

*Secretary of The Pullman Company, Chicago.*

In reply, Mr. Weinsheimer said: "While we would be glad to be of service to you in this direction, we have never gathered any data in relation to our employes of the character which you mention, and I regret, therefore, that it would not be practicable for us to furnish you any information in the line of your investigation."

MR. A. H. WIGGIN,

*Vice-President of the National Park Bank, New York.*

He says they have no college men in their employ.

MR. W. H. LINCOLN,

*President of the Chamber of Commerce, Boston.*

The writer states that he has no college men among his employes; that he prefers to take younger men.

In reply to the question, "Will not the work and experience that a young man obtains in any line of business develop the mental qualities required in that business fully as much as would a course in college?" he says: "Yes — especially experience. If a young man is ambitious, he will cultivate his mind in various ways."

MR. FRANK E. PEABODY,

*of Kidder, Peabody & Company, Boston.*

Mr. Peabody says he is unable to answer the questions in detail, but writes a letter from which we quote as follows:

"We have had quite a number of college men among our clerks; the number at present is, I think, eleven out of sixty-eight.

"Our general experience with them has been that they have either proved exceptionally efficient, or else, finding themselves unlikely to rise rapidly, have left us voluntarily. \* \* \* Most of the college men at present in our force have been with us but a few years."

MR. PERCY STRAUS,

*with R. H. Macy & Company, New York.*

The writer states that they have very few college men among their employes, but does not give the proportion.

In reply to the question whether they give preference to college men when selecting help, he says: "We have in certain instances."

He states that he thinks that college men show greater mental ability and advance more rapidly than persons of about the same caliber who have not attended college. He replies in the negative to the question, whether the work and experience that a young man receives in any line of business will develop the mental qualities required in that business as much as would a course in college. In the face of this he says he does not consider that there is need of more than a gram-

mar-school education in a general business life, and that he would not advise a young man who had only \$5,000 to spend it for a college education.

MR. F. N. BREWER,

*Manager, John Wanamaker Co., Philadelphia.*

"We are not able to give exact information covering our entire force, but in certain departments, including those in which retail selling of goods is done, the Counting-room, Customers' Accounts, Auditing and Mail Order, in which a total of 542 men are at present employed, twenty-six are found to have passed through a full or partial college course. The other departments, such as Delivery, Packing-rooms, etc., would naturally show a smaller proportion of college men.

"The third question (A and B) does not consciously enter into the consideration of employment. No doubt the fact of a college course would lead us to expect greater intelligence and thus weigh in favor of an applicant, but this is not a question which is at all habitually considered.

"As you would judge from the reply to question three, we are hardly able to reply to question four, the difference, if any, between college men and others not having been sufficiently marked in our experience to have impressed us."

MR. ANDREW B. COBB,

*of Stanton, Converse & Company, Boston.*

Mr. Cobb says that they have no college men in their employ, and that they prefer high-school boys. He thinks that: "As a rule, men out of college are no better fitted for business life, if as well, as boys from

school, and they have to lose the four years of business training at a time when boys absorb rules and ideas very rapidly. Boys are more susceptible to training than college men."

MR. R. M. FAIR,

*Manager, Marshall Field & Company (Wholesale),  
Chicago, Ill.*

Mr. Fair's answers to the questions all show that he is not a believer in college men.

He states that the proportion of college men in their employ is five per cent.

MR. JOHN V. FARWELL, JR.,

*Treasurer of the John V. Farwell Company,  
Chicago, Ill.*

Mr. Farwell says that: "College men are apt to make a better impression with the better class of merchants whom they have as customers, while perhaps not as good with the average country merchant."

He thinks "they show greater ability in deciding questions and in making sales and purchases, and on that account are likely to advance more rapidly."

He does not, however, appear to be very enthusiastic on the subject, for in reply to the question, whether the work and experience which a young man obtains in any line of business will develop the mental qualities required in that business fully as much as would a course in college, he says: "As a rule it will, considering the business qualities alone."

He also states that their experience has been that the graduates of country high schools, with a year or



two of experience in the retail dry goods business, make the best all-around men for them.

Replying to the question whether he would recommend a young man with only \$5,000 to spend it for a college education, he says: "On the basis of a money-making success, we do not believe we would so advise."

Their proportion of college men, he says, is about five per cent.

MR. W. C. THORNE,

*General Manager of Montgomery Ward & Company,  
Chicago.*

Mr. Thorne says that the proportion of college men in their employ is about ten per cent. That persons having a college education show greater mental ability and advance more rapidly than those of about the same caliber who have not attended college. He does not, however, give preference to college men; in fact, he avoids them, except in the few cases where he finds they are willing to begin at the bottom of the ladder and work their way up.

MR. ALBERT A. SPRAGUE,

*President of Sprague, Warner & Company, Chicago.*

Mr. Sprague does not answer the questions in full, but has this to say:

"I think the college education is neither a drawback nor an advantage in a commercial life, except in the greater resources it gives a man.

"A man's success depends more upon himself than on his education."

He thinks that the college men who go into commercial life usually show greater mental ability than

men without such education, and that "if they have the perseverance they advance more rapidly."

He says that in selecting help he does not give preference to college men, nor does he avoid them; that the proportion of college men in their employ is small.

AMERICAN SUGAR REFINING COMPANY,

*New York.*

In reply they state that they have no college men in their employ, so can not answer the questions.

MR. S. NORVELL,

*President of Norvell-Shapleigh Hardware Company,  
St. Louis, Mo.*

The writer says he does not give college men preference, nor does he avoid them, and that the proportion of such men in their employ is not over five per cent. He thinks they do not show greater mental ability, and that they do not advance more rapidly.

As to whether there is need of more than a grammar-school education in a general business life, he says:

"Yes, if a man reaches the higher grade positions — No, if he does not."

Answering the question, whether the work and experience that a young man obtains in any line of business develop the mental qualities required in that business fully as much as would a course in college, he says:

"Yes, but the development will be narrow, not broad. A man educated altogether in a business life, as a general thing, is more narrow in his views than a college-bred man."

He would not advise a young man with only \$5,000 to spend it for a college education, if he intended to enter business.

His answer to the last question is to the effect that he would not, as a general rule, favor the college man, but he thinks that, in a few cases, a man with a college education would be worth twenty-five per cent more to him than a man without such education.

In addition to his answers to the questions, he makes the following general remarks:

"It may not be out of place to say, in concluding, that my observation of the work of college men has been that they lack concentration — they do not know how to economize time. They are not willing to sacrifice present comforts and convenience for the possibility of future gain. At college they do not seem to teach either the value of time or how it may be saved. After several years of leisure and the independence of a college life, a young man who enters one of our large modern business houses finds himself sadly out of place and out of touch with his surroundings.

"It seems to me that it is a very natural result of the habits formed in college that so many college men find life on Western ranches, in mines, or in outdoor work generally more to their liking than the confinement and restrictions of a business house.

\* \* \* \* \*

"My experience in business with college men has not been in their favor. If I decide to have my son follow a business career, I will not send him to college."

MR. E. S. CONWAY,

*Secretary of the W. W. Kimball Company, Chicago.*

Mr. Conway states that the proportion of college men in their employ is four per cent ; that he does not give preference to nor does he avoid college men, and that his experience has been that the college graduate does not, as a rule, show greater mental ability, but he thinks he should.

In reply to the question whether he thinks there is need of more than a grammar-school education in a general business life, he says: "We are sure that all else being equal, a college education should be an advantage to a young man entering business life."

He closes his letter with the following remarks:

"If all young men who desire a college education, and are able to attain it, returning from college at twenty-two or twenty-three, with their feet flat on the ground, and a willingness on their part to begin at the bottom, working in the primary school of business with boys of fifteen or sixteen years of age, and never refer to the fact that they are college bred, but are content with the consciousness that they have a good foundation and apply their energies to their business undertaking, such college graduates will stand a good chance before middle life of passing the boy who began his business life five or six years earlier, but without the college education.

"In making the above statement, I wish to emphasize the fact that my own experience as to college men in business has been limited, for the reason that the majority begin with us at sixteen or seventeen and work up, or out. If the college man, with a literary education only, goes into business, he comes into com-

petition with young men who have been learning business details for five or six years, which is a heavy handicap, and can only be overcome, if at all, by superior application, which is quite as likely to be developed by the boy who went out to work at sixteen.

"Considering education in a broad way as training not confined to colleges or classrooms, it is evident that the successful business man must have education, whether he acquire it at college or dig it out; but I believe that the qualities on which the successful business man depends — staying power, grasp, accurate knowledge of values, and ability to execute — are not products of the classroom as distinguished from the shop and the office."

MR. WILLIAM SELLERS,

*President of William Sellers Company, Incorporated,  
Philadelphia.*

Mr. Sellers states that he has a few college men in his employ, the proportion being about three-quarters of one per cent.

His answers to the other questions are so coupled with conditions that I do not quote them, as they would throw no light on the subject.

MR. HENRY W. CRAMP,

*Vice-President of the William Cramp & Sons Ship  
& Engine Building Company, Philadelphia.*

"Without taking up seriatim your questions as to the employment here of college men, or men who have not enjoyed a collegiate education, we will say, generally, that such questions cut no figure whatever with us in selecting a man for any position in our employ. We

employ men solely with reference to their capacity for the work which we desire them to do, and it is entirely immaterial to us how, when or where, or by what kind of process they acquired the education and training that may fit them for their duties."

MR. EDWIN REYNOLDS,

*with Allis-Chalmers Company, Milwaukee.*

While he apparently favors college education, Mr. Reynolds has replied to only a few of the questions, and these answers are so hedged with conditions that it is impossible to find any clear-cut expressions to quote.

He states that the proportion of college men in their employ would probably be not over five per cent, and his letter does not indicate that he makes any pretense of hiring such men, or that he has given the subject special consideration.

MR. L. A. CARTON,

*Treasurer Swift & Company, Chicago.*

The views expressed by Mr. Carton on this subject are not exactly clear, and it seems evident from his letters that he has given it but little thought, and has not had sufficient experience with college men to enable him to form any judgment.

He says the proportion of college men working for them is less than one per cent, and makes the remark that he does not believe their business is attractive to men who have had advanced educational facilities, but I can not see why the work in their office should differ materially from office work in any other line of business.

## CRITICISMS ON THE FOREGOING LETTERS.

Mr. Merrill's letter is a bright and shining example of the difference between theory and practice, a difference to which I have already had occasion to refer. It is a well-known fact that people will argue most strenuously in politics and religion for propositions which they ignore utterly in practice, and the same idiosyncrasy appears in questions of education. For some reason best known to himself, Mr. Merrill is enthusiastically in favor of the college graduate in business until it comes to employing him in his own; then his interest seems to have evaporated.

While Mr. Tuttle apparently favors college men, his statements would have been much more satisfactory had he answered all the questions, and shown what proportion of his men were college bred, and whether he had really made any practice of employing such men and giving them preference.

Here is the first of many occurrences of a phrase ("all other things being equal") which seems to have a peculiar fascination for my correspondents on this subject. In one form or another it appears in so many of the replies that one would suppose that it seems to them especially logical and satisfactory. Now, the fact is that, in the very nature of the case, it is simply impossible that other things should be equal; that is just the fallacy which I am combating throughout this book. But this point is considered more at length on page 73.

That Mr. Harris gets mixed on his lines of college education is not so much to be wondered at, considering how illustrious an example he has in the President

of Harvard, as already noted. He has nothing to contribute to the real point at issue except his "impressions." But his actions speak louder than his words, for the best he can say is that he has "some" college men among his employes.

Then he falls back on that amusing stock phrase, already noticed—"all things being equal"—which seems to mean so much and really means nothing.

Mr. Ripley affords an amusing example of hedging. After saying the best he can for the college graduate in business he seems to have suddenly bethought himself that he had gone too far, and so proceeds to upset his own argument by taking exactly the same view of the matter for which I have been contending all along. In the latter part of his letter the only serious error is that he limits the loss of time to four years in college. To that must be added at least three years spent in preparation for college, making a total of fully seven years lost out of the best part of a young man's life.

A great many of my correspondents manifested a strong disposition to give me their "impressions" and "convictions" rather than facts, and to this Mr. Hughitt was no exception. Giving his "convictions" is the natural resort of the man who has no facts to offer.

The argument that the answer to my questions "depends upon the boy" is also a prime favorite, being used in various forms by several of the letter writers. I have answered it at length on page 74.

The views of Chauncey M. Depew, which Mr. Smink endorses so warmly, must be an extract from



some after-dinner speech at some college banquet, where the genial Chauncey, having dined and wined well, naturally felt drawn to say all the nice things he could think of about college graduates.

As to Mr. Smink himself, he is only another case of theory and practice traveling in opposite directions. It will be noticed that he states that the industries with which he is connected have few college men in their employ, the proportion of these men to the whole being, as he says, "almost infinitesimal." This would seem to me to be an indication that he does not carry out his theories in practice. The only valuable part of his letter is that in which he draws so good a picture of the conceit of the college graduate; which agrees perfectly with what I have said on that subject on page 93.

In regard to Mr. Hyman's criticism I will say only this: How can the scope of my inquiry be "too narrow" when it involves the welfare of thousands of young men who graduate every year from the academic department of our colleges, knowing full well that they must make their own way in business life and imagining that the education which they have acquired at such a cost of effort; time, and money will be a help to them?

What Mr. McCormick has to say about "the same endowment," "same environment," and "same opportunities," is the same old idea, under a different form, of "all other things being equal," which I have exploded on page 73.

Mr. Antisdel's argument betrays the same "structural weakness" as that of so many others, for, by his

own admissions, he has given the matter little thought and that very recently. Naturally, therefore, he falls back on the meaningless stock phrase of "everything else being equal."

The letter from Armour & Co., like so many others, tries to face both ways at once. It would seem as though there were very few business houses where greater opportunities existed for utilizing college men, if they possess the merits which the writer of this letter seems to think they have. As they have few such men in their employ, it is evident that the importance of hiring college men has not made a very strong impression upon them.

The latter part of Mr. Conway's letter contains all that I care to notice, for it concedes the very position which I have taken all along. It is useless for Mr. Conway, or any one else, to speculate on what might be if the college graduate were altogether different from what he is. "A willingness to begin at the bottom" and "never to refer to the fact that they are college bred," is just what does *not* distinguish college graduates.

#### CERTAIN DEDUCTIONS.

Perhaps the most noticeable feature in these letters from business men is the inconsistency shown by nearly all who have expressed themselves as favoring college education. Many of them make the statement that there is need of more than a common-school education in a commercial life, and that there is something about the mental training and mental discipline which a

young man receives at college that is of great value to him in business, enabling him to grasp questions and reason out matters more readily than one who has not attended college. It will be observed, however, that, with two or three exceptions, none of these gentlemen appears to make a point of employing such men in his business.

Two business men who appear to be particularly enthusiastic advocates of college education are Mr. Simmons and Mr. Antisdel, but their position is greatly weakened by the fact that they have been of their present opinion on this subject for only a very few years, and have but a small proportion of college men in their employ; which would seem to indicate that the great success they have met with in their business has been gained without the assistance of college men. I think it is exceedingly questionable whether, with the limited experience that they have had with these men, they are justified in making such broad claims as they do for college education. These are the only two men among my correspondents of whom it can be said that their practice is in the least degree consistent with their theories.

Besides those already referred to, there is quite a number of others who also appear to have stretched their consciences a little in order to say a good word for the colleges. I have no doubt that their remarks have been intended as a kindness to college people, but it seems to me that they have taken the wrong course, and that they would have treated the colleges, and especially the young men who contemplate attending such institutions, with greater kindness had they, instead of attempting to conceal the truth, come out in a perfectly frank way and stated the cold facts.

## RAILROAD MEN.

In this connection I wish to call especial attention to the letters from Mr. Merrill and Mr. Welling.

If college men possess the qualifications which these gentlemen claim for them, is it not strange that the great corporations with which they are connected have not employed them more extensively, for they have much greater opportunities to utilize such men than any other class of employers?

It seems to me that there is no branch of railroad work in which there is greater need of men who possess good tact and general ability than in the position of station agents, and the fact that so few college graduates are found among them I think fully confirms my claim that anything further in the way of school training than can be obtained by the time a boy leaves the grammar grade would be of no advantage whatever to persons in the above, or, in fact, almost any other department of railroad work.

Considering the fact that the hundreds of men at the heads of railroads throughout this country have been able to conduct their business successfully, although possessing only a very moderate amount of education, and that the college graduate is conspicuously scarce in the higher positions in the railway service, it seems to me the height of absurdity for any one to claim that the subordinate positions require highly educated men. To do so is equivalent to saying that a person who might be capable of filling the position of president of a road is insufficiently educated to occupy one of the minor positions, and what is true of the railway business is of course equally true of a mercantile business.

Much has been said in various ways in connection

with this subject in regard to higher education being favored by railroad men, but in the letters that I have received from such gentlemen not one of them has expressed any regret on account of having failed to receive such an education himself.

#### LEWIS INSTITUTE.

A number of years ago there lived in Chicago Mr. Allen C. Lewis, who, from what he had seen of manual training and technical schools during his travels abroad, had formed the opinion that these institutions possessed some merit, and he therefore decided to leave his large fortune for the establishment of a school of some such general character. It was found, upon his death, that he had left to trustees in Chicago a sum which was to be used for that purpose when it had accumulated to a certain figure.

When that time arrived, the trustees, not feeling certain what would be the best kind of a school, and wishing to make no mistake in a matter of such importance, invited a large number of prominent men in that city to a dinner for the purpose of discussing the subject. Some time after that meeting it occurred to me that it might be a good idea to establish a school for the training of men for railroad work, and I spoke of it to several prominent railroad men; but, although they talked as though they thought it might be a good thing, no enthusiasm whatever was shown about it. I even wrote to the trustees and suggested the establishment of such a school, but the idea was not adopted.

Now, in view of the high opinion which many of these railroad men seem to hold concerning a college education (as shown by their answers to my inquiry, and by their letters referred to by President Thwing,

of Adelbert College, in his articles which appeared in several publications a few months ago), does it not seem strange that it has never occurred to any of them to establish such a school as I have just mentioned, or even to suggest such a course to some of the colleges? This is especially remarkable when it must have come to their notice that many of our schools and colleges have discovered that the kind of education they have been offering in the past has not been along sufficiently practical lines, and are now anxiously looking for suggestions that will make their course of study more practical.

“EVERYTHING ELSE BEING EQUAL.”

Many business men, in theorizing on this subject, have said that they would give preference to college-bred men, “everything else being equal”; or, “all other things being equal.”

They do not state just what they mean by this remark, but I presume it is their idea that, if they had to choose between two young men of equal natural abilities, one being a college graduate and the other not, they would favor the college man. It will be seen, however, upon reflection, that this is not a supposable case; that is, there is no such thing in this instance as “everything else being equal.” For it must be assumed that the young man who did not go to college has gained about seven years’ experience in the line of work in which he is seeking employment, in consequence of which he has quite a thorough knowledge of the business; and it will be found that in every instance the employer will give him preference over the young man who is just leaving college.

## “WOULD DEPEND UPON THE BOY.”

In response to the question whether they would advise a boy to go to college, some of these gentlemen say that this would “depend upon the boy.”

Here again they fail to explain their meaning, but I imagine that where a boy appears to have a capacity for absorbing knowledge in the grammar school, keeps well up toward the head of his class, and is persistent in his desire to go to college, they would advise his doing so. If this is their idea, then the question arises, why would they recommend his pursuing this course in preference to taking up some line of work? The mere fact that he shows a capacity for learning and has a notion that it is a desirable thing to go to college is certainly no proof whatever that such an education would be of value to him, and I maintain that these gentlemen, instead of advising him to take such a course, ought to have corrected his mistaken theories on this subject in the same manner that I am now endeavoring to do.

## NOT ONE CONSISTENT BELIEVER.

From the foregoing it will be seen that I consider that everything which has been said by these business men in favor of college education for men in commercial life is simply a piece of deception, and I think there is practically not one consistent believer of college education among them.

The truth of the matter is that, when it comes to considering an applicant for a position, few of these gentlemen will be found to pay any attention to the amount of knowledge he may have of Greek, Latin,

literature, etc., or care a straw about the mental drill and discipline, or the well rounded character that he may have acquired through a course at college.

The only thing that interests them is whether he understands their business and can promote it. This is all that has any weight with them in the selection of help—a truth which can not be impressed too strongly upon every candidate for commercial pursuits.

#### THE USUAL METHOD OF EMPLOYING.

I regard the letter from Mr. Townsend as being the most businesslike of all the replies received, and believe it will be found that the method which he says is followed in his bank is the custom of practically all business men—that is, they take boys about sixteen years of age who have attended the lower schools and train them in their own methods, advancing them as they prove worthy and as the business requires. Not only is this the most economical way, but Civil Service reform and fair play demand that young men who show themselves worthy and capable should be promoted.

Every young man ought to realize that if he is to receive advancement, he must make himself worthy of it, and when he proves himself deserving, it is an injustice to deprive him of promotion by bringing in outside help, such as college graduates. Besides, if outsiders are hired for such advanced positions, the chances are that, three times out of four, a mistake will be made, and the experiment will result in a waste of time and money. On the other hand, an employer is in little danger of making an error when he promotes young men who have been educated in



his establishment, for he has had plenty of opportunity to acquaint himself with their characters and capabilities.

#### A COLLEGE GRADUATE'S EXPERIENCE.

In this connection some remarks made by a college graduate in an unsolicited letter recently sent to me will no doubt be of interest, for I believe that practically all college men, who possess no business experience, meet with similar difficulties when seeking employment, and that this letter shows clearly the attitude of business men toward them. The general character of his letter is such as to make a very favorable impression upon any one receiving it — I think much more so than ninety-nine out of a hundred from college men — and in view of his experience it is easy to imagine what that of others must be.

After discussing some questions which are not relevant to this investigation, this graduate takes the ground that experience is far more valuable than theories in any discussion of this kind — with which view I fully agree. He then goes on to say:

“I think that my experience may be taken as a pretty fair test of the value of a college education in ‘hustling for a job.’ Summarized, it stood thus: I answered over 450 ads. of all kinds, taking every precaution to make my replies as businesslike and convincing as possible; sent out over 70 typewritten applications to picked addresses; and made innumerable applications in person. In almost every case I was met by the same fatal question, What do you know about our business? In Chicago, at any rate, the employer makes it the first condition of engagement that you

shall know about his business: if you lack that qualification, he cares not how fine your personal qualities may be, how excellent your mental capacity, how faithful your zeal. He will not give you even a chance to show what you can do.

"Does some one say, the reason that the college man can not find a business position is because he is too proud to begin at the bottom and work his way up? There again appears the ignorance of those who theorize about that which they never tried. In this city, at least, employers of business help will not take a man who is nearly twenty-five years of age as a beginner without business experience. They want young fellows in their teens, and so specify in their ads.; of course they can get plenty of them. They are cheaper, will last longer, and are more easily reduced to mere cogs in the business machine. A college man knows too many other things.

"As a last resort I even applied to Mr. A. C. Bartlett. In my innocence I imagined that the friend and advocate of the college graduate in business might consider my exceptional character, references, and general capacity to be so much of an offset to my ignorance of hardware quotations that he might be willing to utilize my ability and reliability in some corner of his large business. He assured me politely but positively that he could not use a man in his business who did not know it from the bottom up!"



## PART THREE.

### FURTHER MISREPRESENTATIONS OF EDUCATORS.

In addition to the false statements made by the heads of colleges in their replies to my letter of inquiry, as referred to in Part One of this book, I call attention to the following falsehoods and misrepresentations that have been gathered during this investigation.

### PRESIDENT JORDAN'S EXTRAVAGANT CLAIMS.

Dr. David Starr Jordan, President of Leland Stanford, Jr., University, has written at considerable length upon this subject in a recent issue of the *Independent*, but it is unnecessary to reply to his argument in detail, since it is sufficiently covered by the pages of this book. He is most emphatic in his claims for the value of college education to the business man, but his claims manifest the usual confusion of ideas and impracticability of the college educator when he undertakes to deal with business questions. The notion which he, in common with most of the college presidents, entertains with regard to the helpfulness of breadth of education to the young man who must hustle for himself in commercial life, is absolutely erroneous. On the contrary, it is much more likely to injure his chances.

It remains only to give attention to some of his

unjustifiable remarks. He says that this is the "era of great projects, of great achievements," and that "the business of to-day and of the future demands a higher grade of intelligence and a more highly specialized ability than the individual commerce of a generation ago. It therefore demands higher training."

My reply to this is: If college men have not been able to demonstrate their worth in the smaller operations of the past, it is absurd to claim that they will be in greater demand in the larger operations upon which we are now entering.

In another place President Jordan says: "It is when exceptional effort or exceptional responsibility is demanded that training shows itself. The exceptional man places himself in line for just such possibilities."

To this idea I have replied elsewhere in this book. Here I will say only, that if President Jordan's statements were correct, college men would be in great demand by business men instead of being shunned by them.

#### COLLEGE CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY.

But the most astounding of President Jordan's claims is found in this: "Of all the business men of the world, those sent out from the American university are the most alert, the most enlightened, the keenest of mind and the most effective in action. These are our captains of industry, and the young fellows who have worked their way from the streets to the counting-room as cash boys, errand boys and apprentices, must continue, a few bright individuals excepted, to plod along in the ranks!"

What a rhetorical balloon! Not one of the cap-

tains — or, more accurately speaking, generals of industry — so far as I am able to ascertain, has been through college. President Jordan should be more careful in his statements.

In another place I find this: "Mr. Irving M. Scott, of the Union Iron Works, the builder of the Oregon, has among his employes numerous graduates of Cornell and Stanford. He told me the other day that he regarded a university man as worth fifty per cent more than a man who had come up to the same level by practical experience." President Jordan is mistaken, for I ascertained by correspondence with Mr. Scott that he referred to technical men only.

With reference to the success attained by college-trained mining engineers, which President Jordan makes quite a point of, I would say that I have never claimed that an expert in this line of work could be made out of raw material; it is one of the few occupations for which a man needs to be specially educated.

He speaks in a rather contemptuous way of the people who grow up from the lower positions of cash boys, floorwalkers, clerks, etc.; which seems to me exceedingly poor taste. He should remember that it was in just such positions as these that Mr. Carnegie and many others of our strongest men started, and I think this remark shows the contempt for honest labor which is altogether too prevalent among the educational classes. For my part, I have a greater respect for honest labor than for men who make their living by sharp practice and by humbugging the public.

But there is hope yet for President Jordan, for he admits that in the past the college has not been doing as good work as it ought to or could have done. This seems to be the idea now of practically all college men.

## THE TESTIMONY OF MR. ANDREW CARNEGIE.

Some time ago I noticed that one of these college advocates, in an attempt to bolster up the importance of college education, made the claim that Mr. Carnegie had said he owed his prosperity to college men. The following extracts from his book, "The Empire of Business," show how absolutely false such a statement really is:

"In my own experience I can say that I have known few young men intended for business who were not injured by a collegiate education. Had they gone into active work during the years spent at college they would have been better educated men in every true sense of that term. The fire and energy have been stamped out of them, and how to so manage as to live a life of idleness and not a life of usefulness has become the chief question with them. \* \* \* \*

"I have inquired and searched everywhere, in all quarters, but find small trace of him as a leader in affairs, although not seldom occupying positions of trust in financial institutions. Nor is this surprising. The prize-takers have too many years the start of the graduate—they have entered for the race invariably in their teens—in the most valuable of all the years for learning—from fourteen to twenty. \* \* \*

"The almost total absence of the graduate from high positions in the business world would seem to justify the conclusion that college education as it exists seems almost fatal to success in that domain.

\* \* \* \* \*

"A captain of industry is one who makes his all in his business and depends upon success for compensation. It is in this field that the graduate has little

chance, entering at twenty, against the boy who swept the office or who begins as shipping-clerk at fourteen. The facts prove this."

#### LETTERS FROM PRESIDENT THWING.

As a glaring example of the wholesale deception that has developed in connection with my investigation of this subject, I will refer again to the correspondence that I have recently had with Charles F. Thwing, President of Adelbert College, Cleveland.

In several articles published by him recently he mentioned the fact that he had corresponded with the heads of a hundred prominent railroads in this country with regard to the value of college education for young men who enter the railway business. As he claimed that "the general and strong tone of all the answers was that the boy should be educated, and that the college represented the fitting means, method and condition for giving him an education," I wrote him several times, asking whether he could give me the names of a few that he was certain were acting upon that theory in their business.

All the information I have been able to secure from him is a letter in which he mentions the names of four railroad presidents who he thinks are honest in this matter, but he says he may be mistaken about even these, as he could not find their letters. There is no doubt in my mind that if President Thwing would investigate this matter more thoroughly he would find that not one among the entire one hundred railroad managers with whom he corresponded actually gives any preference whatever to men who have received a college education.

### PROF. CHAPLIN'S FATAL ADMISSIONS.

Especially feeble was the plea of Professor Chaplin, of Washington University, St. Louis, in a recent article which I think was inspired by the former edition of my book. After practically admitting that there is not much to show for college education, he says, in conclusion, that we must take it on faith and that a hundred years hence a very different state of things will be seen in this country as a result of college education. This position is similar to that taken by the Milwaukee *Sentinel* when commenting upon my book.

It will thus be seen from their own admissions that when college advocates undertake to produce evidence in support of their institutions, they make a most dismal failure. It certainly is asking altogether too much to request the public to wait another hundred years for colleges to demonstrate their worth.

### REPLY TO PROF. G. A. CLARK.

The following is my reply to a letter received from Professor Clark, of the Leland Stanford, Jr., University, which it is unnecessary to print since the reply explains itself:

"CHICAGO, May 9th, 1902.

"With reference to your suggestion regarding the introduction of business training in a college curriculum, I would say that, while this would perhaps be an improvement upon the old methods, I find that I am so entirely out of accord with everything in the line of higher education, that I can not bring myself to the point of encouraging you in the changes which you propose.

"Of course, anything in the way of study that is



along the lines of practical education possesses some advantages, and it might be possible that colleges could pick out some such lines in which a young man could, by systematic application, make more rapid advancement than he would be able to do in an office.

"I am, however, very strongly of the opinion that these institutions can not be made useful to business men in the production of help, and that it is a great mistake for a young man who expects to enter upon a business career to spend his time and money taking a course in college.

### *The Best Course.*

"It is my belief that it is infinitely better for him to go into an office at the age of, say sixteen, for by so doing he will be earning something, instead of being under a large expense; at the same time he will be acquiring information along the line of work which he expects to follow, as well as learning a hundred and one things that will be more or less useful to him later in life and which he could not possibly obtain a knowledge of at college.

"As to your suggestion in regard to the study of stenography, of course stenographers are in great demand, but young men who wish to take up that branch had better attend some school for that particular purpose.

"With regard to bookkeeping, it seems to me that the rules covering this branch of work could be very easily published, if this is not already done, so that those desiring to study it could do so at home as well as in school.

"The ordinary bookkeeper is in more or less demand in the smaller institutions, and a young man

will undoubtedly find that a knowledge of this work is advantageous. I presume, however, that the great mass of bookkeepers are produced in the same way as the majority of mechanics — that is, they commence in an office just as an apprentice does in a factory, and advance from one line to another as they grow up, in this way becoming proficient in some branch of work without any cost.

### *Mechanical Education.*

“Referring to what you have to say concerning practical training in mechanical lines, I do not think this cuts any figure whatever so far as the making of mechanics is concerned. If such young men as you turn out had been put at some mechanical work while they were young, they might have stayed at it and become mechanics; but after going through such a school as you propose, they are spoiled for anything of that kind, and while the mechanical work that they learn there may be of some advantage to them in after life, it really cuts no figure in the question of education.

“Should your proposition be carried out, I contend we would run into the same mistake that is met with in what are called ‘trade schools,’ which are popular with theoretical educators at the present time. As business is now conducted, the boys are earning their living while acquiring their trade, and if they can do this, what necessity is there for ‘trade schools?’

### *Demand and Supply.*

“Persons in your proposed line should bear in mind that they ought to produce something for which there

is a demand; and further, that it is not sufficient when the demand comes from simply a few persons; it should be such a demand as to take all the young men of this kind that the colleges can turn out. In other words, these institutions should be conducted upon the same principles upon which a man runs his factory. If a manufacturer expects to succeed in his business, he is compelled, by competition, to produce an article that will sell at a profit, and must look forward to see whether there is a demand for his product. It will not do for him to turn out goods for which there is no demand, or produce them at a price which will not admit of their being sold at a profit. A man who should go to work, for instance, and build a hundred airships without knowing that they would be in demand or that he could get his money out of them, would most certainly be considered crazy.

"Should you disagree with the views that I have herein expressed, I would suggest that you submit your curriculum, with full particulars, to some of the gentlemen who appear to have a favorable opinion regarding the value of college education, say Mr. W. F. Merrill (Vice-president, N. Y., N. H. & H. R. R. Co.), Mr. A. C. Bartlett (Vice-president Hibbard, Spencer, Bartlett & Co., Chicago) or Mr. E. C. Simmons (Simmons Hardware Co., St. Louis), and request them to give you an order for some of the students who will graduate from your college.

"As President Thwing, of Adelbert College, recently stated that, in connection with an investigation which he made a few months ago on the question "Should railroad men be college men?" he corresponded with the presidents or general managers of one hundred leading railroads in this country, and that

they all expressed themselves as favorable to college education, this probably covers the country quite thoroughly, and you doubtless would not go amiss should you apply to any of these gentlemen for orders. If they are sincere in their statements, I think you have a right to expect orders from them, and in case they decline to furnish them, they deserve the condemnation of every young man who has been influenced by their position on this subject to attend college.

“If a clothing merchant who would sell a young man a shoddy suit of clothes is looked upon as a fraud, what can be said of the people who are in any way responsible for his spending his time and money to get a college education, provided a market can not be found in advance for college graduates?”

## PART FOUR.

### GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE SUBJECT.

#### WORDS OF WISDOM.

“The best education in the world is that got by struggling to make a living.”

WENDELL PHILLIPS.

“The true order of learning should be, first, what is necessary; second, what is useful; and, third, what is ornamental. To reverse this arrangement is like beginning to build at the top of the edifice.”

MRS. SIGOURNEY.

“There are three classes of people in the world. The first learn from their own experience — these are the wise; the second learn from the experience of others — these are the happy; the third learn neither from their own experience nor from that of others — these are fools.”

CHESTERFIELD.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF STARTING RIGHT IN LIFE.

Having laid before the reader the views of both college educators and business men, I now desire to impress upon young men seeking a college education the vital importance to them of a wise choice. Too much stress can not be laid upon this. Life is too short, and the path to success too long, to permit indulging in the luxury of making mistakes.

The years which a young man spends in college are decidedly the most important and valuable in his life. It is during this period that he usually lays the foundation for his life's work, and not the slightest doubt should be allowed to exist regarding the utility of the occupation to which he devotes this time. When he arrives at the age of manhood, it is expected that he will be at least self-supporting and prepared to assume the responsibilities of manhood.

Many young men receive an erroneous impression regarding the value of a college education, and think, as the president of a western college once remarked in his address to a graduating class, that upon leaving college they can go out and pick up gold bricks in the street. It is only after they have spent their valuable time in college and have started out to earn a living that they find their higher education is practically of no advantage to them; that they must commence at the foot of the ladder, which they could have done better seven years before, and would now be earning a reasonable salary.

In other words, not until then do they learn the truth of this college president's further remark that the bricks referred to are fastened down very tight. I think they will also discover that, instead of their college education making them especially skillful in loosening the bricks, it really has the opposite effect, and that they are less able to accomplish this task than the man who did not go to college. Are not the heads of these institutions treating boys unjustly when they allow them to go through college under this misapprehension, and fail to enlighten them upon this subject before they have spent their time and money and are about to go out into the world?

## COST OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION.

The answers from college presidents to the question regarding the cost of educating a student have been omitted, because several have given no information at all upon this point, and I think those who attempted to do so have been mistaken in their figures.

For the purpose of my article this question should be considered in a strictly businesslike way, for it seems to me that education should be subjected to practically the same tests of its value as any other commodity. To arrive at the total expense we should take into consideration not only the cost of tuition, but the amount which the boy would have earned had he been employed in some business occupation from the time he finished grammar school until his graduation from college, and also the difference between his earning capacity for several years after he does start in business and that of the young man who has not attended college, all of which I roughly estimate as amounting to from \$10,000 to \$12,000. When this sum is multiplied by the number of students turned out by these institutions every year, it will be seen what an enormous economic loss is involved. The \$10,000 that is consumed in the education of a boy from grammar school through college would buy a farm and put some one in a position to make a comfortable living.

## SUCCESS WITH AND WITHOUT EDUCATION.

In one of the letters from business men attention is called to an article by John W. Leonard, entitled, "College Education and Success," in which reference

is made to some statistics in the book, "Who's Who in America," showing the number of successful men in this country who have had a college education.

This book is also referred to in a letter received from President McLean of the University of Iowa.

To this statement I reply that these men are exceedingly hard to find and that they are but a very small percentage of the successful men of the country. But, even if they were successful as a rule, the question is, how much does this prove as against the men who made an equal success without education? The fact that college men become strong men does not prove anything, but the fact that men without education develop into strong men proves everything.

I have no means of judging as to the correctness of those statistics or how successful such men have been in business, as there are all degrees of success; but I will say this, that probably not more than two or three of the pioneer business men in Chicago who have made a marked success in business ever attended college, and the remainder did not, as a rule, receive even a grammar-school education. The great majority of our strongest and most successful men in the country to-day came from farms and villages and obtained very little education.

Many claim that, as a rule, men without a college education who have made a success in business would have been more successful had they received such education or, at least, that by reason of their strong character, the time spent in college would not have materially detracted from their subsequent usefulness in commercial life, but with this view I can not agree. In my opinion, few of them would have been anywhere near so successful in business had they gone



to college, for their success was largely due to the fact, which was impressed upon them in the early part of their career, that they would have to struggle if they expected to succeed. Besides, they had seven years more than the college graduate to devote to business.

Much has been said about the man who works his way through college being a person who is likely to obtain some benefits from it ; but why this would apply to such a man more than to any other person it would be difficult to explain. He may possibly get more out of college than the ordinary run of men, but there is no particular reason to imagine that he would get enough more out of it to be of any particular advantage to him more than to the general run of people. Such a person who is ambitious and willing to work, if he would apply the same energy to some business, would in all probability make a marked success.

I feel quite sure that if the men who have been successful in business were asked whether they regretted starting in business at the time they did, in place of going to college and taking the chances of afterward being able to gain the success which they have achieved, all would answer in the negative. No doubt many successful men wish they had received a better education, for some of them are not sufficiently educated to be able to compose a letter correctly or express themselves clearly and properly in business matters, and have not acquired a taste for literature and many other things that contribute to one's happiness, but I contend that a grammar-school education would have been sufficient to place these gentlemen in the position they desire.

## COLLEGE CONCEIT AND PESSIMISM.

In letters received from students, one of them says : " I believe the average college student learns to be a loafer and money-spender rather than a money-saver and energetic citizen ;" and I think he might have added that a course in college has a tendency to make a young man conceited and unpractical, and creates in him something of a contempt for labor and for those who have not a college education.

I take the ground that a young man who goes to college not only is not benefited by it, after spending seven years in time and \$10,000 to \$12,000 in money, but is most decidedly and positively injured by the college, since he comes out so conceited that he is at a great disadvantage in getting into business, and it takes years, and sometimes a lifetime, to get his head back to a normal size. So much flattery and attention are often bestowed upon the college student that he becomes greatly conceited and thinks he knows it all, and that there is no necessity for him to exercise any reasoning powers. The whole tendency of the so-called " higher education " is to puff the young man up with vanity, causing him to look with contempt upon labor, and even to despise his parents ; their suggestions that he should work for a living are resented by him, since he expects to live by his wits. Then, if wits fail to bring him success, he becomes pessimistic.

## OBJECT OF EDUCATION.

The remark was once made by President Eliot, of Harvard, that the object of education is to make people happy, and I presume that this is its fundamental purpose. I do not imagine, however, that he meant by

this that education or happiness applies simply to the man who is well educated in literature or languages or in the lines which are ordinarily understood to give polish and enable one to be an ornament to society, but that he referred in a broader sense to those persons who are educated in such branches as the arts, sciences, history, mathematics, physics, biology, chemistry, etc.

Whether he would go still further and include men who have had less book education and more practical education, such as is acquired in manufacturing or mercantile industries, I am not sure; but if so, his remark would include a very large variety of what might, in a way, be called educated men. I do not suppose he would take the ground that there is no happiness in this world except that which grows out of the ordinary college education, but would grant that happiness may be enjoyed by any one who has marked knowledge and that it makes little difference what branches his knowledge covers.

For illustration, take such men as Westinghouse, Edison, Cramp, Scott, and hundreds of others that might be mentioned. I contend that the happiness which the most learned college man gets out of life does not compare with that obtained by these men from their business. The greatest pleasure a man can have is that which arises from the feeling that he has been a success in a creditable occupation. On the contrary, the greatest unhappiness comes from the knowledge that one's life has been a failure, and it seems to me that the more a man has of "higher" education, the more severely will he feel this failure.

## THE MAXIMUM OF HAPPINESS.

The great question for every one to decide is, what kind of education is going to yield him the most pleasure; and if he selects an occupation of an educational character that proves to be profitable as well as pleasurable, he certainly has a better chance for enjoyment than would be the case if he took up a line of education which returned him little or no profit.

But many writers claim that the pleasure which a man obtains through his college education more than compensates for the sacrifices which he has to make to gain such education, and heretofore I have been inclined to grant part of this. But recently I have been informed by a person who has had much experience and opportunity for observing the lives of very highly educated people, that there is little or nothing in this theory. He states that, as a rule, these people think just as much of money, dress and display, and apparently are little more resourceful in the way of making themselves and family happy than those not so educated; that they take just as much interest in worldly matters, and are fully as likely to live beyond their means in order to gratify their love of display as though there were no compensating results from their higher education. If this is true of the highest college-educated people, where do those of only ordinary college education get so much pleasure?

Furthermore, many educated men have acquired, just because of their associations, tastes which are beyond their means; and this of course tends to make them unhappy.

## HAPPINESS FROM SUCCESS.

No doubt men of strong character who possess sufficient means to enable them to live without working will enjoy life more if they take a college course. It gives them a standing and position in society which affords them considerable pleasure, but, of course, this does not concern the public. At the same time, I think it is doubtful whether this class of men get more enjoyment out of life than those who have built up a successful business, yet who received only a moderate education. It is my opinion that a man with a college education, and a reasonably good income, will probably get as much enjoyment out of life as one who has a considerably greater income but is without such education; also that an uneducated man with a good reliable income will be happier than one who has received an education but possesses a meager income.

Many of the college graduates refer in their letters to the happiness they have gained from their college training and experience, but I can not understand what particular reason they have for being happy. To claim that a man can be happy simply because he has a taste for literature is taking a very narrow view of the subject. He certainly has been of no benefit to mankind, and there is no reason why he ought to be happy — in fact, just the contrary should be the case. The only men entitled to happiness in this world are those who are useful.

## FALSE PRIDE.

If, as will be noticed later in this article, college graduates usually forget a great part of what is taught them at college, their happiness can not be due to the knowledge gained there; hence, it would seem as

**though** it must come simply from the false pride which **they** feel in having attended some prominent institution of this kind. Surely the large number of students who did not reply to my inquiry for the reason, as I have claimed in another portion of this paper, that **they** have been unsuccessful since leaving college, can not have gained much happiness from their college experience. Instead of adding to their pleasure and enjoyment in life, I think there is no doubt that it has had just the opposite effect.

In letters called forth by this investigation much has been said in regard to money not being the whole thing, and no doubt there is considerable truth in this statement; many people become avaricious and unscrupulous in their desire to obtain wealth, and succeed in acquiring altogether too much of it. At the same time nothing is gained in a matter of this kind by putting it in a false position. If money is not the whole thing, I think it is safe to say that it is probably seventy-five per cent of the whole thing. As a rule, the fact is that money is looked upon with contempt only by those who have not got it and do not know how to obtain it.

#### WHEN IS A MAN EDUCATED?

One of the college graduates remarks that he has forgotten nearly everything he learned at college, and that all the benefit he received there was the mental drill. I have frequently heard other college graduates express themselves in the same manner, that they remembered very little which they learned in college. If this be true, the question naturally arises, how can such persons be considered educated? I should think that they might more appropriately be classed with the uneducated.

Even if a man has attended one of the best institutions of learning in the country and has retained all the knowledge that was taught him there, I contend that he is not to be compared with one who, though not having received a college education, is an extensive traveler, reader and observer, and has from his association with different people acquired a large amount of general information that is useful to himself or to the public.

It is often claimed that college is a great place for learning self-reliance and for acquiring knowledge of human nature. It is true that the student meets many others in his three or four years in college, but it is still more true that students present a large degree of similarity. Generally speaking, the student's associates are all like himself, of about the same age, from the well-to-do and educated classes, all having similar prejudices, ideas and ideals.

Furthermore, the college is a kind of sheltered nest where the young man grows his wings protected from storms and the rude jostling of the crowd, and where he breathes an atmosphere of tradition and sentiment altogether foreign to that of the world of affairs. His collegiate triumphs are won with comparative ease and bring him an inordinate amount of petting from classmates and admiring friends, so that when it comes time for him to fall out of the college nest into the hard, practical world he has acquired a most tremendous opinion of his own importance.

#### THE BEST COLLEGE IS THE WORLD.

That this is true is proved by the sickening shock experienced by so many college graduates when they strike out into the world and find themselves obliged to

stand on their own feet in the midst of a pushing crowd which has no awe of a diploma and despises culture. When the young man wakes from his dream and realizes the cold truth that he is nobody, in spite of his sheepskin, one of two things happens. If he has the right stuff in him, he puts the dream behind him and strikes out manfully for himself as if it had never been; but too often he persists in blind self-esteem and goes through life a pitiful failure, blaming the world to the last for refusing to recognize his superiority. No, the world is the best college for acquiring knowledge of all kinds of human nature — good, bad and indifferent.

A young man is much more likely in business than in college to be brought in contact with people and questions which compel him to exercise his reasoning powers, and the mental training thus received will in all probability be as valuable to him as that which he would have obtained in college. At the same time, he is acquiring a knowledge of business which places him decidedly ahead of the college graduate.

The young business man is in a position to realize much more fully than the man in college possibly can, the importance of informing himself along the particular lines which will be beneficial to him in his occupation. If he wishes at any time to acquire knowledge, either for this purpose or to enable him to enjoy life better, he will find plenty of opportunities for doing so outside of college, for teachers can not supply any information that is not already contained in books.

I am inclined to the belief that the real difficulty is found not so much in the education taught at college as in the educators themselves, and in the ridiculous prominence which the public gives to the various athletic and other exhibitions of college societies. As



to the manliness with which the college is supposed to imbue the student, it seems to me that when we consider the way the game of football is played it makes the prize-fighter appear like a gentleman.

#### COLLEGE MEN HAVE NO SPECIAL ABILITY.

While my chief aim in this investigation has been to show whether or not the colleges offer any advantage to young men in preparing for a *business* life, the discussion of the question naturally leads up to various general claims that are made for higher education; and it may be well to consider briefly whether the colleges have sufficient merit in these other directions to warrant their existence.

The great claim of college advocates is that these institutions are turning out men who, by reason of their broader views, greater mental ability and stronger character, are capable of wielding a larger influence and accomplishing more good for their country than those who have not received such an education. It will be found that this theory is no more supported by the facts than is their claim regarding the advantages of a college education for business men, which has been completely exploded by my investigation.

I claim that there is no evidence that college men possess higher character than other people. In fact, my experience with them in this investigation would rather prove the contrary and that they are not men of veracity, and without this quality I do not understand that men can have character.

Instead of the college having the effect of training and disciplining the young man's mind and making him better able to reason out matters, as so many people

claim, the fact is that exactly the opposite is the case. The student's head seems to be so stuffed with unimportant things that there is no room for absorbing useful knowledge. In other words, he has become so theoretical that he is not capable of being practical. I must admit that I find it difficult to understand why this is so. Education certainly ought not to make a man stupid, and upon leaving college he should have at least as much brains as when he entered, besides which he should have acquired some useful knowledge there.

In addition to the great claims that the advocates of colleges make in regard to the mental drill and discipline, etc., which a man gains by a course in college, they have much to say about the advantage it is to a man in the way of research. I am at a loss to understand how there can be anything special in this feature. As all libraries have the various subjects tabulated, I can see no reason why persons desiring any special knowledge can not be placed in the way of finding it by the librarians.

#### EDUCATORS DO NOT AGREE.

I contend that not only are college-bred men seldom found to be conspicuous in the great moral questions affecting the welfare and happiness of mankind, but the superior advantages which their friends would have us believe they enjoy have not conferred upon them any special ability for arriving at the truth in important questions. This is proved by the fact that they are quite as likely to be at variance in their opinions as the uneducated. A good illustration of this was furnished by the meeting of college professors at Detroit some time ago. Not a single question came up

on which these men could agree unanimously; in fact, one of them took the position that the teaching of the three R's in the common schools was a great mistake. The same condition will be found to exist in all their meetings.

Recently other professors have expressed themselves as not at all in favor of the present college course, and great confusion exists among these educators to-day as to what they should teach. The only thing that they practically do agree upon is that the college is not doing the right kind of work.

Some college presidents, apologizing for not showing better results from college men, make the statement that they can not make a whistle out of a pig's tail. While I agree with them in this, I think such an excuse comes with very poor grace from men who are all the time taking these pigs' tails and undertaking to make whistles out of them, consuming their time and money and withholding this information until it is too late.

#### A PRACTICAL SURRENDER.

One of the best proofs of the correctness of my position on this subject is furnished by the action of the college authorities themselves. On all sides they are hastening to make good the very defect which I have been criticising by establishing business courses as part of the regular college curriculum. The University of Wisconsin, Northwestern University, the University of Chicago and others have either begun such courses or are about to do so. Even President Jordan has seen a great light, for he admits that business courses might be included in college education, and

declares that they shall be adopted in his institution as soon as there is a public demand for them! Which is only another way of saying that he does not propose to let any students get away if he can hold them.

While I am glad to see such a stirring among the dry bones, and shall do what I can to stir them some more, at the same time I can not regard this new departure as any gain to the public. All it signifies is that the universities, for the sake of adding to their attendance of students, are adding to their already sufficiently complicated machinery a department which has long been occupied by the exclusively business college, and more satisfactorily than the university can possibly hope to do. For the business college has the advantage of being able to concentrate all its energies on its one specialty.

The only plea which the university can put forward to justify an invasion of the business college's province is that of giving the young business man a broader education. But breadth and theories are just what the young man does not need for business success, as I have already fully explained. So even here the universities are on the wrong track.

#### COLLEGES PATRONIZED BY THE RICH.

Probably one of the strongest arguments in favor of colleges is the fact that, as a rule, the most successful business men in the country send their sons there. But whether these gentlemen do so with the expectation that the boys will thereby become better business men, or because of the feeling that it will enable them to become more valuable members of society and get more enjoyment out of life, is a question. As such

young men do not have to make the struggle which their fathers did to establish a business, possibly they can afford to indulge in this luxury, but so far as its benefiting them in a commercial way is concerned, I claim that the general results of education will apply to this class of young men as well as to others who go to college. We find large numbers of college graduates to-day who have come into a thoroughly established and successful business that their fathers had built up, and it remains to be seen how they will turn out.

The fact that a great many of our prominent business men support colleges is probably looked upon as another argument in favor of such institutions. No doubt some of my letters of inquiry have been addressed to this class of men, but, so far as I am aware, no letters have been received from them, and no one who has written has made any mention of this point. We have, therefore, no explanation from such men as to whether they contribute to colleges because a thorough investigation has convinced them of the importance of these institutions, or because it is simply a fad with them.

#### TOP-HEAVY EDUCATION.

It is very strange to me that the people who are doing their utmost to maintain and multiply colleges can not see that they are making our educational system dangerously top-heavy. No wise man attempts to build the upper stories of his house until he has laid a good, substantial foundation. Now, the best foundation for any nation is a good common-school education for the great mass of the people, and yet my misguided friends

are doing all they can to turn their wealth and influence in favor of an education at the top at the expense of the bottom. Even admitting all that is claimed for the advantages of higher education, still I contend that the same money spent in educating the masses up to a higher standard would be of infinitely more benefit to the general public. We are never going to reform society from above downward; it must be done from below upward.

I know of nothing that people go into so blindly as educational enterprises. Many who show excellent judgment in other matters exhibit an incredible lack of it when anything of this nature is presented to them. They take the greatest pains to inquire into the work of other public institutions which they are asked to support, but no matter what sort of an educational scheme is brought to them, they seem to take it for granted that it possesses merit, and are ready to aid it without question. When a person of high standing contributes to the support of such enterprises, it is evidence that he endorses them. In so doing, he assumes great responsibility, and therefore it is of the greatest importance that he satisfy himself beyond doubt that he is making no mistake.

## PART FIVE.

### PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL MEN.

Having proved my principal proposition in the preceding pages, I will now ask the reader's attention to a consideration of the question whether a college education is of any value to the large numbers of young men who afterward take up some professional, technical or scientific line of work.

Of the total number of college graduates (about eight hundred) regarding whom I have obtained any information as to their occupation, over seventy per cent are in professional or technical work, as follows :

<i>Lawyers,</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	248
<i>Teachers,</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	117
<i>Doctors,</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	53
<i>Ministers,</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	35
<i>Technical,</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	118
												<hr/>
												571

Would it not have been much better for these young men if, instead of attending the regular college, they had gone to some of the special schools that are established for the particular purpose of educating people in these lines?

So much has been said by many writers about the mental drill and discipline that a young man receives in college and the wonderful advantage it is in many ways, both to him and to society, that I have concluded

to go into this feature of the subject and give some further thoughts on it as well as my own experience with college men.

### THE VALUE OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION.

While I have had but a very limited experience with the ordinary college-taught man, I have come in contact with large numbers of men who have had a technical or scientific education in mechanical lines, and even these persons, instead of showing evidences of greater mental development, have almost invariably exhibited a total lack of common sense or reasoning power, and I am thoroughly convinced that what is true of them is true of college-trained men generally.

But the importance of technically educated men in mechanical lines of work, aside from electricity, chemistry and mining, has, in my opinion, been greatly overestimated. Many people who are unfamiliar with manufacturing seem to feel that there is a great field for such men in this kind of business, apparently forgetting that almost all the success which this country has gained along these lines of industry was achieved before technical men were ever heard of.

They should realize that practically all branches of manufacturing business have been brought to such a wonderful state of perfection that there is very little chance for further improvement in them even by practical men who possess a large amount of experience, combined with good common sense. This being the case, there surely is no opportunity for the technical man, who is notably lacking in this latter qualification, to accomplish anything new in the mechanical direction.



## LAWYERS.

From the fact, which has incidentally been brought out in this investigation, that more than twenty-five per cent of college graduates go into law, it will be evident to every one that this must cause a tremendous overcrowding of that profession, in consequence of which an honest lawyer is quite apt to lead a miserable existence. The temptation to be unscrupulous becomes almost irresistible, and the result is a hundredfold more injurious to the community than the higher education can be beneficial.

A reputable lawyer has stated to me that, in his opinion, the average yearly income of country lawyers is not over \$600, and of city lawyers \$1,200. This would be an objectionable state of things even if honor and education always went together; but, unfortunately, educated men are quite as likely to use their education for evil purposes as those who are uneducated, and this is particularly true of lawyers and public speakers.

It is only necessary to go into our courts of so-called justice almost any day in the week in order to see how lawyers use the education they have received to assist them in defeating the ends of justice and in robbing people of their rights and money. In like manner a well-educated speaker is often able to overthrow the arguments and thwart all the efforts of a less brilliant man who is advocating a noble cause. If a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, how much worse is a great deal of knowledge in unscrupulous hands.

I fail to see, therefore, why the people who support colleges should feel that they are doing any good by furnishing the facilities for producing so many law-

yers. For myself, I should as soon think of putting money into a scheme for spreading smallpox as into any institution for turning out lawyers. Even the educators, some of them, have begun to wake up to the suspicion that they have been making a big mistake somewhere, and I have seen it admitted in some of their public addresses that it has been a great waste of college work to produce such a quantity of lawyers and doctors for whom there is no demand or necessity.

### A THANKLESS TASK.

I am perfectly well aware I shall receive neither the thanks nor the sympathy of the college clique for this investigation, for the so-called higher education is the fashionable thing and it is "bad form" to say anything against it. Many people of prominence, in their interviews or articles on this subject during the past year, have, through ignorance or enthusiasm, made exceedingly foolish and absolutely untruthful statements in behalf of educational institutions, and it is just such remarks, together with the absurd notoriety given to the various athletic and other contests of college clubs and societies, that are largely responsible for the false ideas prevailing among a large portion of the public in regard to the value of a college education.

My great object in this investigation has been to furnish facts instead of theories, in order that people may be able to determine whether they are justified in making the great sacrifices that are required to send their boys to college. This is a work that should have been undertaken long ago by the college authorities themselves, for it is their duty to the public to see that no deception is allowed to exist on this subject. But,

even after I have furnished them with the evidence that has been produced by this investigation, I do not suppose for one moment that they will make it public or retract their statements. Instead of laying the facts before the young men who are preparing to enter college, they will go right on deceiving as many as they can and taking the money of those to whom they can give nothing in return but useless knowledge. Practically they stand on the same level as the merchant who sells goods which he knows to be shoddy.

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Crane, R.T. 339785  
The utility of an academic or classic  
real education for young men...

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PRIMARY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

